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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a collaborative study undertaken by five rural, unit school districts in Illinois to provide data to be used in planning for school improvement. Information was gathered from on-site visits by teams of constituents from other districts and through a survey of perceptions of local community persons regarding school district quality. A random sample of 1,770 registered voters was surveyed by mail. The report describes the following common threads, or issues, across districts, that emerged during factor analysis: (1) the overall attitude towards the school; (2) a hard-working orientation; (3) the importance of co-curricular activities; (4) the size of the school; (5) the importance of starting students right; (6) the use of alcohol and drugs; (7) the desire to move students to another school; (8) the size of classes; (9) the importance of students getting good grades and jobs; (10) assistance to working parents; (11) teacher quality and discipline; and (12) retention only with consent. Findings from the open-ended question portion of the survey are listed by school district in the following categories: (1) perceptions of weakest and strongest curricular subjects; (2) what parents least and most like about the schools their children attend; (3) the biggest problem facing their district; (4) what the district should be doing now that it is not doing; (5) ways the schools in the district are particularly good; and (6) how parent, community, and school can work together. The survey questionnaire and frequency distributions of response for items by district are appended. (KS)

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ED 336243

School Improvement Change Grant
Community Survey Final Report

A Report to

Toluca Community Unit School District #2
El Paso Community Unit School District #375
Lowpoint-Washburn Community Unit School District #21
Minonk-Dana-Rutland Community Unit School District #108
Roanoke-Benson Community Unit School District # 60

July 15, 1991

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Executive Summary

In November 1990 five rural, unit school districts, El Paso, Lowpoint-Washburn, Minonk-Dana-Rutland, Roanoke-Benson, and Toluca Community Unit School Districts entered into a collaborative effort sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education to gather data to be used for planning purposes by each of the individual school districts. Prior to this collaborative project, some of these districts had shared some specific district resources to better meet the educational needs of their constituents. The average daily attendance of these five, rural school districts ranges between 277 and 890 students with an average class size range reported at the elementary level as 17 to 27.5 students, at the junior high level as 16.3 to 30.5 students, and at the high school level as 11 to 16.1 students.

As part of the School Improvement Grant, these districts committed to gathering information from two sources; (1) through the use of visiting teams comprised of selected district constituents who were to conduct on-site visits with each of the collaborating school districts, and (2) through a survey instrument developed to assess the perceptions of local community persons regarding school district quality. In order to assess local community perceptions regarding school district quality, a 20% random sample of registered voters was drawn from the unduplicated listing of registered voters by precinct in each district. This method permitted a total of 1770 surveys with the following number of respondents by district: El Paso, 453; Lowpoint-Washburn, 264; Minonk-Dana-Rutland, 400; Roanoke-Benson, 413, and Toluca, 240. Overall, the return rate was similar across districts with El Paso, Minonk-Dana-Rutland, and Toluca reporting a 41% return rate, Roanoke-Benson a 40% return rate, and Lowpoint-Washburn a 35% return rate.

In general the respondents reported similar perceptions about their school district and their schools by elementary, junior high, and high school levels on both the forced-choice questions and on the open-ended questions. Although the respondent profile was similar across the districts, just under 40% of the respondents reported having children currently enrolled in the district's schools at the time of the survey, while approximately 50% of the respondents reported that they had previously had children enrolled in the district's schools.

In examining each school district's surveys, specific perceptions are reported which suggest the overall attitude of the respondents toward the district's schools. In general, respondents who judged school district quality as positive in the forced-choice section did so also in their responses to the open-ended questions. The opposite finding was also observed where respondents were dissatisfied.

Limited generalizations regarding the overall opinions can be made based on the findings of this survey due to the consistent number of respondents who reported "don't know." In some areas, the "don't know" responses have practical implications

for the administration and the school board as they enter into planning. On the average, the respondents like small schools, believe that the teaching staff is qualified and caring, have differing opinions about the strongest and weakest subjects within a district although patterns are persistent across the building levels. Across the districts, concern was raised regarding the curricular offerings available at the high school level, whether or not students at the junior high and high school levels worked "hard enough," and whether or not sufficient effort was made to keep the community appraised of school matters.

Areas of concern that seem to need further examination include the areas of discipline, use/problems related to alcohol and drugs, number of educational changes being implemented, and need for curricular changes to meet today's needs. Personnel concerns also arose and included the lack of commitment and poor attitudes of some teachers -- particularly tenured teachers who have been in the district for a significant number of years. Also in some districts the administration and school board were viewed somewhat unfavorably.

However, respondents had no difficulty identifying factors that made the schools in their district very good. The areas included: quality personnel, variety of program offerings, and class sizes. With regard to personnel teachers, particularly at the elementary level, were applauded for their dedication, level of commitment to students, and their high level of qualification. Highly rated programs included both academic and co-curricular programs. Class sizes were viewed very positively, with small class sizes equating to a perception of individual attention by teachers.

With regard to choice of school, respondents were clear and consistent in identifying factors important in selecting a public school for their child(ren). These factors included: teaching staff quality, curriculum offerings, and the maintenance of student discipline. However, less than fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that they would elect to send their child(ren) to a different school.

In summary, these five rural, unit districts are more alike than they are different. While important distinctions can be noted among these schools, the broad message from this survey effort is clear. There is currently a high level of public interest and support for school improvement efforts. Each district must take significant steps to stay in touch with its constituencies, both those who have children in school and those who do not. Engaged educators can capitalize on such opportunities by involving their public in true progressive efforts. Each district will have to find its own path on the road to excellence. For these five districts, the time to begin that walk is now.

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The School Improvement Survey

As superintendents and boards of education enter into planning strategies, they are confronted with the need to ascertain the will of the constituents they serve. Confounding the issue of seeking constituent pleasure is the fact that the local school system serves a broad constituent group, many of whom do not currently have children attending schools within the district. Critical to the planning process is the assessment of district goals and objectives. In assessing the district's goals and objectives, school officials need to gather information from groups internal and external to the school. The information gathered then becomes a vital data source in making informed decisions.

In response to a request for proposals sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education addressing opportunities to explore school improvement, the superintendents of five rural, unit school districts, located along the Interstate 39 corridor, decided to pursue the suitability of entering into a collaborative venture. At the present time some of these rural, unit districts have been involved in cooperative agreements which authorized some sharing of resources across school district boundary lines. In general, each district has been facing similar issues, challenges and concerns, including, but not limited to: (1) escalating costs, (2) reduced revenues, (3) aging facilities, (4) changing student enrollments, (5) limited curricular programs and services, and (6) pressures to meet state mandates.

Thus in early September 1990, the Superintendents of Toluca, El Paso, Lowpoint-Washburn, Minonk-Dana-Rutland, and Roanoke-Benson School Districts met with their Boards of Education to discuss the advisability of entering into a collaborative working agreement with each other. This select group of neighboring school districts worked to develop a grant proposal to submit to the Illinois State Board of Education focusing on how these districts could systematically gather information about their own district as well as gather information about their neighboring districts. This information would then be used by the superintendents as they entered into district planning strategies with their board of education.

The Superintendents of these districts requested that their Board Presidents assemble in a joint meeting to explore the possibility of entering into a collaborative study. After some discussion, these five rural, unit school districts, whose average daily attendance ranged from 277 to 890 students, agreed to submit a collaborative proposal to the Illinois State Board of Education. The grant proposal requested funds to study the feasibility of each school district's options regarding entering into collaborative and/or cooperative relationships with one or more of the other districts for the purpose of improving the educational programs and services available to each community.

In the proposal submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education in September 1990, the school districts stated that they intended to gather information from their internal and external constituents. Based upon the request for further information, a revised proposal was submitted in November 1990. This revised proposal was later approved by the Illinois State Board of Education, with the Toluca School District Superintendent designated as the administrative agent and project coordinator.

The grant specified that the districts intended to collect information regarding district strengths and weaknesses using two different methods. First, visiting school teams, comprised of members representing the instructional staff, board, administrators, and business interests, were to be formed by each superintendent. These visits to each of the participating school districts were intended to provide each team with on-site observations to assist them in determining how their school district could be supported through working with one or more of the other school districts to meet the learning needs of the students of their home district. Through these visits, each district sought to determine how their district was similar to or different from each of the other districts with regard to students, curricular programs, co-curricular programs, facilities, equipment, and personnel. Second, consultant services were to be contracted to develop a survey instrument to be disseminated to citizens in each of the school district communities. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: (1) to gather information from the community regarding their opinions about the quality of the local school system programs and services, and (2) to determine the level of community support for undertaking more collaboration and cooperation among the selected school districts in providing school programs and services.

Development of the Survey

A team of consultants from Illinois State University was contracted to develop, disseminate, and complete the analyses of the survey responses. In January 1991, a consultant met with the superintendents and board presidents to seek their suggestions regarding topics and ideas to be included in the survey instrument. The superintendents agreed that the survey should be mailed to a sample of registered voters. Some discussion focused on the need to survey the community rather than the parents of students currently enrolled in each of the school districts. The superintendents stated that seeking responses from a representative sample of persons currently residing in each of their school districts would be beneficial in examining what changes, if any, the citizens desired as well as indicating what level of support these citizens would provide to them. This information was judged critical to the continued planning efforts to meet the short-term and long-term needs of the district. Consensus was reached by the superintendents that the questions posed should include the following:

1. Questions which required the respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with the school district's programs and services.

2. Questions which required the respondents to indicate strengths and weaknesses observed in the school district's programs and services.

3. Questions which required the respondents to identify problems facing the school district.

4. Questions which required the respondents to indicate their willingness to support program options not currently available within the school district.

5. Questions which permitted the respondents to suggest alternative practices which could potentially improve the school districts programs and services.

Four data sources, all related to the Phi Delta Kappa supported *Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Towards the Public Schools*, were used in the development of the "School Improvement Survey" specifically designed for these five rural, unit school districts. These data sources included:

1. Polling Attitudes of Community on Education Manual (Bugher, 1980),

2. The Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Polls of Attitudes Toward Public Schools, 1969-88: A 20-year Compilation and Educational History (Elam and Bodinksy, 1989),

3. The 21st Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (Elam and Gallup, 1989), and

4. The 22nd Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (Elam, 1990).

The structure and framework for the questions presented on the survey instrument were developed from these sources. Over the years, the Gallup Poll has sought public opinion about schooling. Although the Gallup Polls seek responses from a representative sample of all United States citizens, the superintendents of these select rural, unit districts believed that planning at the local level would be better supported if the citizens of the local community had the opportunity to participate in the process of gathering information. Thus, some of the questions asked in the survey closely model specific questions which have been asked of the respondents in the "Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude

Toward the Public School" interview surveys during the last 22 years, while some of the questions asked were designed specifically for use on this instrument.

A preliminary survey instrument was developed and disseminated to each of the five school districts for their review. A revised instrument was reviewed by the school district superintendents in February 1991 in conjunction with a meeting with the consultant. After two more revisions, the superintendents, with the support of their boards of education, authorized the consultant to prepare the survey for printing in March 1991.

The survey instrument included three major sections: (1) Information about your children; (2) General information about you; and (3) Your opinions of school district quality. Both forced-choice questions and open-ended questions were used. The same survey was disseminated in each of the five districts. Each district's surveys were color-coded to assist in data analyses.

Sampling Residents

The registered voters in each school district comprised the population of interest. Each superintendent obtained the voter registration lists from their respective county clerks. The lists were organized by precinct. The superintendents forwarded these voter lists to the consultant for use in drawing the sample.

School District	Registered Voters
El Paso	2233
Lowpoint-Washburn	1301
Minonk-Dana-Rutland	1992
Roanoke-Benson	2026
Toluca	1198

Each voter list was examined to determine the number of households included in each precinct. A 20% random sample was drawn from the unduplicated listing of registered voters by household in each precinct. This method insured that a maximum number of different households would be included in the survey by only sampling a single voter from each household. This sampling technique resulted in the following sample size:

School District	Voters Registered	Total Households	20% Sample
El Paso	2233	1352	453
Lowpoint-Washburn	1301	712	264
Minonk-Dana-Rutland	1992	1200	400
Roanoke-Benson	2026	1124	413
Toluca	1198	692	240
Totals:	8750	5080	1770

The surveys were mailed April 15, 1991 with a request for completed surveys to be returned by April 30, 1991. Each mailing included a letter identifying the purpose of the survey signed by both the district superintendent and the president of the board of education, a color-coded survey, and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope indicating that the survey should be returned to the superintendent. The returned surveys were then forwarded to the consultants for data analysis. Five weeks were allowed for the return of surveys before data analysis began.

Responses to the Survey

A team of data analysts were engaged to assist in the quantitative and qualitative analysis; this report is the final product of their efforts. A total of 1,770 surveys were mailed to the selected residents of these five school districts. Of these a total of thirty were returned by the postal service (for reasons of either a "undeliverable address" or "addressee moved"). A total of 696 residents returned completed survey instruments to their respective districts.

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Surveys Mailed Out	453	264	400	413	240	1770
Surveys Voided	7	2	6	4	11	30
Surveys Returned	183	91	163	164	95	696
Rate of Return (Valid Surveys)	41%	35%	41%	40%	41%	

Analysis of the surveys proceeded into two concurrent stages. One was concerned with the rate of individual response to each of the question items, while the other addressed the content of the open-ended narrative responses. Both threads of analysis were brought together in this final report.

Findings from the Forced-Choice Questions

All of the data analysis was performed on Zenith PC/AT computers. The categorical and numerical data from these surveys was entered into the Dbase IV Data Management computer program as the surveys were returned and then exported to SPSS/PC+ for quantitative statistical analysis.

A number of different quantitative numerical analytical techniques were used to examine this data. Rates of responses were tallied by district, and for all respondents. These frequencies are summarized in Appendix B. The rates were then compared for statistical difference using the non-parametric Chi-Square test. Comparisons of note have been incorporated into this discussion, though it will be pointed out where non-statistically significant (though substantively interesting) findings are being discussed.

Frequency summaries only tell of the numbers who responded to single questions. They do not inform about general trends or tendencies of responses throughout either an entire district or for all respondents. The analytical technique of Principal Components Analysis, using the Varimax method of orthogonal rotations to facilitate interpretation, was used to clarify these common patterns of response. Presented following the discussion of frequencies, the discussion of central factors was confined to those exhibiting significant degrees of summary power (having an eigenvalue greater than 1.0).

Finally, the question was raised of whether all respondents, across all districts, feel the same way about each of the issues raised. Multivariable Discriminant Analysis with all questions entered was used to examine the differences in response between each of the five districts in the final stage of the quantitative analysis.

Throughout the discussion a special attempt has been made to avoid the use of unnecessarily complicated terms. For that reason specific levels of significance are not presented, but rather a more robust discussion of the underlying issue is offered. The reader should be aware that, except where noted, only those findings having a statistically significant test result (at the $\alpha = .05$ level) were included.

Rates of Response to Individual Questions

General Information About Your Children

Respondents have lived in their districts an average of 31.2 years. Toluca residents reported living the longest in their district, averaging three years more than those in the other districts. Although interesting this apparent difference

was not statistically significant, as each of the districts exhibited the same degree of respondent residence longevity.

Just under forty percent of all respondents indicated that they had at least one child attending school in their district at the time of the survey. This rate was fairly uniform among the five districts. These respondents stated that their children were predominately attending Elementary and Junior High, with less than five percent of those enrolled in special education classes. While 38.1% of the families had at least one child currently in school, only 21.8% had two children , 7.3% had three children, and 1.7% four children.

Half of the respondents reported having children in the district previously. Roanoke-Benson district respondents exhibited the most mobility with only 40.9% of those families having had children previously enrolled in the district, while residents of Toluca demonstrated strong permanence with a previous enrolled rate of 58.9%. Of those who reported having had children who were previously enrolled in their district the average number of years since the last child attended school in the district was close to 13 years. Data indicate a general consistency of enrollment over the last two decades.

General Information About You

Respondents to the School Improvement Survey were most often the chief wage earner for the household, married, and approximately fifty years of age. Their spouses' ages averaged to just slightly less than their own. On the whole fewer than 6.7% of respondents had completed some schooling beyond a four year degree. Thirteen percent reported four years of college, with 11.6% having two years beyond high school. The clear majority of respondents (approximately forty-five percent) graduated from high school as their highest level of education. Roanoke-Benson and Toluca both showed markedly higher percentages of respondents completing two years of college only, while El Paso had the greatest number of respondents with some post-baccalaureate education.

Not surprisingly the occupations of the chief wage earners clustered around farming and agri-business, manual labor or trade, and professional or business types of employment. The total respondents in the "Other" and "No Response" categories for each district is greater than that found in any one response category for the district. This response pattern may indicate that a sufficiently large number of respondents did not find a response item that fit their desires, or omitted answering that question for other reasons. This pattern is repeated several times in later questions.

The clear majority of respondents across all districts live in houses they own themselves. Their estimated annual incomes cluster predominantly in the "$30,000 to $34,999" and "Over $50,000" ranges. Of the districts Minonk-Dana-Rutland residents were most homogeneous in their earnings, spanning two categories from $25,000 to $34,999.

Your Opinions of School District Quality

Respondents were requested to use a rating scale where "A" represented "Excellent"; "B" represented "Very Good"; "C" represented "Average"; "D" represented "Below Average"; and "F" represented "Failing". In addition, respondents were permitted to answer "Don't Know". Ratings of the quality fell predominantly in the "B" and "C" categories for the bulk of respondents across all of the districts. Those who did not rate the school a "B" or a "C" most often answered "Don't know" or failed to answer at all (Accounting for approximately thirty percent of all respondents across each of these questions). While some differences did exist across the districts in terms of opinion on these first items, a fairly uniform consensus does present itself.

Elementary schools received a solid "B" grade, with slightly more of the non-"B" respondents favoring a "C" rather than an "A". The vocational programs in all schools were given strong "C" ratings. Both Junior High and High School grades were evenly split among those who responded between "B" and "C". The condition of school buildings fared at the lower end of the scale, with the majority indicating a grade of "C".

Both the school board and administration received mixed reviews, with approximately 78% of those grading splitting their opinion between "B" and "C". Teachers fared better, as most respondents gave them grades of "A" or "B".

Academic programs secured a mixed review, with eighty percent of those responding indicating a grading as either "B" or "C". Vocational programs received a rating of "C", yet better than forty percent of those responding to the survey did not respond to this question (perhaps lacking familiarity with the program). The same pattern of response was true for the co-curricular activities; while there was a larger than usual number of "Don't Know" or "(No Response)", those who responded were split between a "B" and "C" grade.

Curriculum needs in the district's Elementary, Junior, and High Schools were clearly dominated by a lack of expressed opinion (either "Already meets today's needs" or "Don't know"). At the Junior High, EL Paso and Minonk-Dana-Rutland respondents did not know if the curriculum was meeting today's needs, Lowpoint-Washburn respondents thought their curriculum should be changed and

Roanoke-Benson and Toluca respondents thought the curriculum was meeting students needs or were unsure. Of the respondents expressing an opinion about the High School, all but Roanoke-Benson respondents indicated a need for a change in the curriculum.

Approximately eighty percent of the respondents across the districts rated the co-curricular activities from "Fairly Important" to "Very Important". Less than ten percent of the respondents across the districts rated the co-curricular programs as "Not too Important" or "Not Important at All".

In responding to whether students work "About Right", "Too Hard", or "Not Hard Enough", patterns across the districts by grade level were observed. In general, across the districts more respondents thought that children worked about right at the Elementary level than at the Junior High or High School level. With the exception of Roanoke-Benson's respondents more than twenty-five percent of the respondents indicated that the children at their High School did not work hard enough. An interesting note is, that while the number of non-respondents remained fairly equal across the Elementary, Junior, and High School questions, the higher the grade level the less certain the respondent was about the level of difficulty of the work. This response pattern may just indicate a general preference of parents and other community members to be more involved in education at the lower grades than at the High School level.

Only about one-third of the respondents supplied the names of weak subjects for all three school levels. Slightly more than twenty-five percent supplied names for strong subjects. The subject area that were given are summarized in the discussion discussing the narrative responses.

Many of the respondents were opposed to allowing students to progress through the school system at their own pace, with only 26.0% (on the average) in favor of a self-paced plan. Toluca residents were most supportive of this individualized progression, while Lowpoint-Washburn was the most opposed. Extending the school day by one hour tended to be opposed by respondents from all districts except those from Toluca. There was a general mix of opinion regarding whether the districts have the right emphasis between college and/or career preparation. Respondents generally favored a higher emphasis on college preparation, except for those in Minonk-Dana-Rutland who were more concerned with career orientation. Finally, while the overall opinion is that student discipline ranges between "Just about right" and "Not strict enough", approximately half of Lowpoint-Washburn and Toluca residents felt that their schools were not strict enough, while half Roanoke-Benson respondents felt discipline was just right.

All respondents seem to get their information regarding the school from a combination of newspapers, neighbors and friends, school newsletters, and school

employees, respectively. Lowpoint-Washburn differs from the others in that its respondents reported getting their information primarily from neighbors or friends, school newsletters, and school employees. Radio or television, and school meetings, were rarely used as a source of information for the bulk of the respondents.

More than half of the respondents stated the use of alcohol in their school district ranged from "Fairly Serious" to "Very Serious". In regard to the use of drugs, nearly half of the residents in El Paso, Lowpoint-Washburn, and Minonk-Dana-Rutland reported use to range from "Fairly Serious" to "Very Serious". The use of drugs was reported to be less serious in Toluca and Roanoke-Benson.

The majority of respondents from all districts report having little idea of the number of educational changes being tried in their districts. Those expressing an opinion, with the exception of Roanoke-Benson respondents, feel that "Not enough" changes are being implemented. Given the high number of respondents indicating "Unsure" or "Don't Know" on questions regarding changes in the school, it is probable that they do not feel that they have adequate information to form an opinion on a number of these issues. El Paso, Minonk-Dana-Rutland, and Roanoke-Benson report no change in their opinion of their school district over the last five years, while Lowpoint-Washburn and Toluca report a "Less favorable" attitude towards their schools.

Respondents felt that teaching staff quality, maintenance of student discipline, the curriculum, class size, and the high schools' placement records of student in jobs were very important to choosing a public school for their child. Furthermore, they felt that school size, convenience of school location, co-curricular activities, and athletic activities were fairly important. The districts were equally divided between rating students' grades as either very or fairly important.

Approximately 40% of the respondents for each district wrote a statement for both what they most liked about their school districts and what they least liked. These statements are summarized in the analysis of the narrative comments.

In general, more respondents reported that their district's "Stayed the same' or "Improved" rather than had "Gotten Worse". However, the respondents reported differences regarding their opinion about whether their district had "Gotten Worse". A higher number of respondents in Toluca and Lowpoint-Washburn reported their district's had "Gotten Worse" than did the respondents from Minonk-Dana-Rutland, El Paso, and Roanoke-Benson, respectively.

Across school levels, respondents from all districts agree that small school size (under 400) is most beneficial to students' learning. Respondents were more

willing to accept a larger High School, however. Additionally, respondents indicated that they do not want to send their children to other schools, with the exception of Toluca whose respondents were most in favor of alternative schools. Unfortunately, no clear patterns of choice were evident from those respondents indicating a desire to change their child(ren)'s school.

Sixty-five percent of the respondents commented on the biggest problem(s) facing their school districts. The analysis of these comments are given in the narrative analysis section of this report. Respondents also saw "Rais(ing) taxes" as the first solution to the school district's financial problems, with "Seek(ing) reorganization" a close second. Cutting school programs was least often suggested.

Approximately forty percent of all respondents provided comments on the remaining four open-ended items on the survey. These items included opinions on: what the school district should be doing that it is not current doing; ways in which the schools in the district are particularly good; how parents, the community, and the schools can work together to improve eduction. These comments are summarized and analyzed later in this report during the narrative analysis.

Common Threads Throughout the Responses

Several distinct threads of common opinion across all the districts that emerged during the factor analysis. A total of twelve different themes were present, accounting for the majority (63.5%) of the total variability in individual response. While most of these themes represent only a small total of overall opinion, each is statistically significant in its own right, and contain meaningful information for district decision makers.

These threads reflect the commonality of opinion across several issues. They are not, in and of themselves, indicators of how a particular respondent (or one district's respondents) feel on that issue. That information must be gleaned from the frequencies of particular responses presented previously. Rather, the analysis of factors is designed to ascertain the common issues underlying particular patterns of response. In this way a reader can more fully understand the opinion of a respondent group on a core theme of issues when their response is known on one (or more) of the component questions.

Factor 1: Overall Attitude Towards the School

The first, and by far the most cohesive, of the topics was a single factor accounting for approximately 18% of the total opinion variability. This theme, comprised primarily from the responses to twelve different questions, centered

around the respondents overall attitude towards the school administration, teachers, board of education, and facilities. It included opinion on whether or not the respondent felt the school had improved over the last five years, and if the respondent's had a positive attitude toward the school.

As the strongest of the factors, the analysis of this item is fairly clear. Respondents form, from a number of different sources, a single, unified view of their school district. If that view is positive, it tends to be an equally-distributed positive view across many areas of school functioning. When negative, that opinion likewise crosses many different boundaries and areas. While the factor of an overall attitude towards the school is not to say that particulars individual would not have their own special like and dislikes, the general opinion is clear: if you like your school, you tend to like most aspects about it; if you do not, then the reverse is true.

Factor 2: A Hard-Working Orientation

The second commonality of opinion used six questions to account for 6.8% of the total opinion variation. The theme centered on a linkage between positive views of the junior and senior high school and a feeling that students need to work hard to achieve particular objectives. This was also tied to a common sense that the school district needs to keep its offerings current ("meet today's needs"). In a sense, this factor reports that both students and schools are partners in the hard work necessary for successful learning. Individuals on the other side of this coin tended to feel that change was more intrusive and disruptive to the process, that students were already working hard enough, and that schools should concentrate on improving existing offerings rather than seeking new ones.

Factor 3: Importance of Co-Curricular Activities

Both co-curricular activities and athletic programs were viewed as either consistently "fairly" to "very" important or "not so important" by the respondents. Regardless of an individual's particular preference, this factor (accounting for 6.3% variability from three questions) was expressed as a leading element in many respondents list of important items in choosing a school for their child(ren). Actual responses, regardless of the district, tended to show a high favorability for these activities, indicating that many of the respondents feel that athletics and co-curricular programs are an important part of a child's educational process.

Factor 4: Size of the School

A desire for a uniformity of school size accounts for 5.8% of response variability. When the three questions relating to this factor are examined, it is clear that most respondents favor a smaller school, under 400 students total.

Factor 5: Starting Students Right

This factor (4.3%) is very similar in nature to Factor 2: A Hard-Working Orientation. The difference in this case is a relationship of response indicating that hard working activities are tied in many respondents' minds to elementary school curriculum and performance. As before, individuals favoring modifications see a move towards a more rigorous program, except that in this factor it is extended into the elementary levels. When respondents felt comfortable with the elementary offerings their responses tended to indicate that students were already working at the right level of "hardness".

Factor 6: Alcohol and Drugs

Both questions appear relatively inseparable in respondent's minds, accounting for 3.9% of total response variation. The shared opinion is that both alcohol and drugs are fairly serious problems, according to a strong majority of the respondents. That this factor did not score as "very serious" seems to indicate that, while drug and alcohol abuse is on the minds of many respondents, it is not one of the major issues about which there is inordinate concern.

Factor 7: Desire to Move Student to Another School

Questions addressing the need for more high school emphasis on college preparation, a desire to see greater changes occurring in the high school, and a sense that taxes should be increased to pay for such changes are all bound up in this single factor. Accounting for 3.5% of response variability, this factor points out that respondents dissatisfied with the current school system are willing to take steps, whether in terms of paying more or moving their children to other education opportunities, to insure their college entrance and success.

It is interesting to note, however, that the majority of respondents to this factor's questions did not express a desire to move their children. They feel that there is a good mix of college and career preparation taking place in the schools, and that school improvement should take place through the perceived less-costly method of reorganization. Thus, while reasons for those who want to move their

child(ren) out of the district appear clear, they are in the minority of total respondents to this survey instrument.

Factor 8: Size of Classes

This factor (3.4% of variability) is very similar to Factor 4, Size of School, and incorporates several of the same ideas. The size of the classes, in addition to the size of the school, is viewed as important and is judged as fairly important in respondents minds when choosing a school for their child(ren). The linkage with the Size of School factor would suggest that smaller individual class sizes are favored over larger ones.

Factor 9: Students Getting Good Grades and Jobs

The ability of the school to enable its students to achieve well, both in and out of school, is an attribute favored by most respondents. Explaining 3.2% of the overall response variability, this factor seems to follow a general theme of both internal quality and external post-graduation accountability. Respondents seem to expect that good grades while in school will relate to job success out of school. The perceived ability of the school to enhance this relationship is reflected in this factor.

Factor 10: Assist Working Parents

A commonality was demonstrated in several items dealing with the kind of issues one might expect to be of concern to respondents where both (or the only) adult in the family works during the day. These items relate to a positive support for school-sponsored, day-care activities, the extension of the school day by one hour, and self-guided program activities for the students. Rather than being related to particular curricular desires, these items center around a caretaking view of the school. Although accounting for only 2.9% of total response variability, this is one indication of the diverse expectations of the public educational system by some area respondents.

Factor 11: Teacher Quality and Discipline

Another of the several items identified as important to respondents in choosing a school for their children, this factor (2.7% of total response variability) links a high quality of the instructional staff with an emphasis placed on student discipline. It appears that respondents believe that high caliber instruction

encourages an ordered and controlled environment. Respondents feel that the two go together well.

Factor 12: Retain only with Consent

This final factor establishes a linkage between a positive attitude toward the school, a belief in hard working students, and a desire not to retain students in grade without the consent of the parent. Retention may be viewed, at least in part, as a failure of the school to accomplish many of the objectives that have been set for it in caretaking for the student. When there is a high degree of approval, respondents may be indicating a desire not to be surprised by unexpected shortcomings. Conversely, when school confidence is low (respondents having a less than positive attitude and a belief that students are not working as hard as they might), respondent desire for parental intervention in the retention process is much more modest. This factor, accounting for the smallest amount of explained variation (2.6%), may just be a further indication of the confidence placed in the school to accomplish particular objectives (such as good grades for students). When that faith exists, and students do not succeed, there appears to be an expressed desire that parents become reinvolved in the process of their child's education.

Common Threads Among the Districts

The final issue addressed in the quantitative analysis of the survey results concerned itself with whether the findings were uniform across each of the districts. Should each district prove to be unique in its pattern of responses the previously identified factors might apply in significantly different ways, or might not even apply at all, depending on which district was being examined. For this reason discriminant analytic techniques were used to search for statistically significant differences among the districts on the questions of respondent opinion on their school district.

This analysis provided two significant discriminant functions. The first, accounting for 32.5% of the potential variation separation, primarily distinguishes the responses of Lowpoint-Washburn residents from those of Toluca. The second function, adding 24.2% of explanatory power, separates Toluca respondents from the other four districts. These two functions are each explained below. Aside from these differences, all five of the districts appeared remarkably similar in their responses. Opinions expressed in one district seem to be well shared across educational-line boundaries.

Function 1: Confidence in your District

In the first discriminant function three of the districts (Roanoke-Benson, Minonk-Dana-Rutland, and El Paso) exhibit very similar patterns of response across all of the questions. Lowpoint-Washburn respondents, however, appear at one end of the spectrum on several critical items while those from Toluca are on the other. This response pattern does not indicate that these respondents view the other's district in some negative way; rather, that they take significantly differing views of their own district.

Twelve items comprise the bulk of this function. They items deal with: respondent perceptions of elementary and high school overall quality (now and over the past five years), the degree to which drugs and alcohol are a problem, respondent favoring of changes to the elementary curriculum, the perceived optimum size of the junior and senior high schools, respondent opinion on the school buildings and school board, and ways in which to raise additional funds for the district. When considered as a whole, each item paints a different portion of the overall canvas that could be referred to as overall confidence in the district.

Residents of Lowpoint-Washburn tended to take a generally positive attitude towards their district. High school quality, past years performance, opinion of the school board, convenience of location, and size of the junior high school all were rated positively. While drug and alcohol use were acknowledged as a potential problem area, more disagreement seemed to be directed towards the perceived quality of the elementary school, unneeded changes in the curriculum, and school district buildings and facilities. Respondent's views were mixed on the best approach to deal with these issues. Responses were split between a desire to raise more money through taxation versus overall district reorganization. With this highest of favorability ratings Lowpoint-Washburn appears as a district mostly satisfied.

Function 2: A Desire for Action

Toluca residents, on the other hand, take a much harsher view of their district. Their view is seen both as an extreme separation from Lowpoint-Washburn on the first function, and as a separation from all four other districts on the second function. Because of these similarities the shared opinions of the Toluca residents will be discussed together rather than via the two separate discriminant functions.

Toluca residents are definitely less concerned about such things as possible drug and alcohol abuse by students. They also feel that district buildings are less

of an issue and, that while a larger high school is acceptable (and, coincidentally, somewhat larger classes), a smaller junior high would be better.

Toluca respondents exhibit a low opinion of high school quality, the administration, the school board, and the district in general. Their responses clearly indicate that they believe school quality and student discipline are not up to expected standards. The respondents value highly the importance of academic quality, yet feel their teachers are only delivering "B" to "C" performance for their students. There is dissatisfaction with the school/district administration and board, and a strongly expressed desire to seek change.

Toluca has the highest percentage of residents (25.3%) in favor sending their children to another district. This response, coupled with a larger percentage of the respondents in favor of raising taxes for school needs, seems to point to a district ready and eager for change.

Findings from the Open-Ended Questions

This section of the report provides the findings from the open-ended questions on the School Improvement Survey. These responses from the open-ended questions were analyzed using The Ethnograph, a program specifically designed to analyze textual data. In presenting the findings, headings are used to represent a specific question and the responses are organized according to district. As much as possible the responses were collapsed and summarized so as to highlight themes that emerged throughout the responses. As will be indicated, for some questions, responses varied widely and no clear themes emerged. The open-ended questions asked focused on respondents' perceptions of course offerings in each district -- encompassing perceptions of weakest and strongest courses; what respondents least and most liked about the school their child(ren) attended; the biggest problem facing their district; what their district is not doing that it should be doing; the ways in which the schools in their district are particularly good; and finally, ideas were solicited regarding how parents, community, and school could work together. The findings from respondents perceptions of district course offerings will be presented first, and findings from other questions will follow sequentially.

Prior to presenting respondents perceptions regarding course offerings a few introductory comments are in order. Two of the open-ended questions serve to orient the results to be presented. Specifically, respondents were asked to share their perceptions of the **weakest and strongest subjects** at the various grade levels -- broadly collapsed into three levels -- elementary, junior high school, and high school. Since they were asked to identify weakest and strongest subjects, percentages of respondents identifying subjects will add up to more than 100% -- respondents could identify multiple subjects areas. Additionally, the results are presented in the form of broad subject areas as opposed to specific courses. For example, chemistry, physics, biology, general science, and geology are all categorized as representing the subject area science. One final point prior to presenting a summary of the results is that the number of individuals who answered various subsections of the larger question differed from level to level and sometimes from question to question.

Perceptions of Weakest Subjects

Lowpoint-Washburn

There was consistency in respondents' perceptions of the two top weakest subjects at the various levels in the schools. The perceived weakest area was language arts; at the elementary level, 72% (31 of 43 respondents said this) identified language arts classes as the weakest classes; at the junior high school

level, 40% (20 of 50) concurred, and at the high school level, 38% (18 of 49) the respondents identified the language arts subject area. The next weakest area was mathematics, again this rating was given at all three levels; between 26% and 34% of the respondents identified mathematics as the weakest subject area at each of the three levels. Science classes were also viewed as weak at the junior high school level and vocational education courses were perceived as weakest at the high school level by approximately 18% of the respondents. Again, of those responding, between 26% and 33% of respondents answered "don't know" to the question of weakest subjects in district.

Toluca

Again, there was a great deal of consistency in terms of perceptions of weakest subject areas at the three levels. At both the elementary and junior high school levels, for example, the two areas most frequently identified as weakest were language arts and mathematics. For the elementary level 40% (18 of 45) and 22% (10 of 45) of the respondents identified language arts and math, respectively, as the weakest subject areas; the pattern was very similar at the junior high school level with 35% (16 of 46) and 22% (10 of 46) rating language arts and mathematics, respectively, as the weakest subject areas. The pattern was different at the high school level. The area most frequently rated as weakest was mathematics, 35% (18 of 51); followed by science, 27% (14 of 51) and finally language arts, 20% (10 of 51). At least one-third and up to 44% of all respondents responded "don't know" to the question of weakest subjects at each level.

Roanoke-Benson

At the elementary level, the subject areas perceived to be weakest were language arts, identified by 44% of the respondents; social science subjects, identified by 18% of the respondents; and science, mentioned by 14% of the respondents. It should be pointed out, however, that 28% of the respondents responded "don't know" to that query. At the junior high school level, the social sciences were seen as the weakest subject areas by 19% of the respondents; language arts and mathematics were viewed as equally weak by 18% of the respondents. Of those responding to open-ended items, 38% indicated that they "Don't know". At the high school level, science was seen as the weakest subject (26%); social science courses were ranked second in terms of weakness (19%). Again, approximately one fourth of the respondents (26%) responded "don't know" to the question.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

At all three levels -- elementary, junior high, and high school -- the area of greatest perceived weakness was language arts. At the elementary level, approximately 55% of the respondents (48 of 88), cited language arts classes as weakest; 47% at the high school level, representing 43 of the 91 respondents to the question; at the junior high school level approximately 39% of the respondents (32 of 83) rated language arts as the weakest subject area at that level. At both the elementary and high school levels, the next weakest subject area, according to respondents was mathematics -- with 38% of respondents at the high school level and 28% at the elementary level communicating this perception. At the junior high school level, social science subjects were seen as the next weakest area of the curriculum (34%) after language arts; this was the third weakest area identified at the high school levels by the respondents. While mathematics was the second weakest subject area at both elementary and high school levels, according to respondents, this was seen as the third weakest area at the junior high school level (19%). The third weakest subject area identified at the elementary level was science (19%). In each instance, however, at least 22% of the respondents indicated that they "Don't know" what the weakest subjects were at the various grade levels.

El Paso

For El Paso, there was consistency with regard to the subject area viewed as weakest at the elementary and junior high school level. 49% percent of the respondents viewed language arts as the weakest subject area at the elementary school level and 35% of the respondents viewed language arts as the weakest subject at the junior high level. At the high school level, mathematics was judged to be the weakest subject area. Mathematics was judged to be the second weakest area at both the elementary and junior high levels. For the high school level, language arts was viewed as the third weakest subject area, with the social sciences being viewed as the second weakest subject area. At the junior high school level, approximately 20% of respondents viewed science to be the third weakest subject area. All other identified areas of weakness represented less than 12% of the respondents. In rating the subjects across all three levels a minimum of 22% of the respondents, to as high as 35% said that they did not know the weakest subject areas.

Perceptions of Strongest Subjects

Lowpoint-Washburn

In this district, the same subject areas that were viewed as weakest were also perceived to be the strongest in the district. At both the elementary and junior high school levels, language arts and mathematics were the top ranked subject areas. At the elementary level, 33% (15 of 45) and 31% (14 of 45) rated language arts and mathematics, respectively as the strongest subjects. At the junior high school level, mathematics and language arts were rated as the strongest subjects by 21% (8 of 39) and 18% (7 of 39), respectively, by respondents. At the high school level, there was not much of a perception of courses being particularly strong. However, language arts and science received some votes for being the strongest subjects at this level. In both instances 14% of the respondents (6 of 43) rated these subject areas as the strongest at the high school level. At the junior high and high school levels, over 50% of the respondents answered "Don't know" to the question of the strongest subjects at these two levels; at the elementary level, 29% of the respondents answered "Don't know".

Toluca

With respect to the strongest subjects, respondents had similar views on subjects at the high school and elementary levels. Language arts was perceived to be the best subject area at both the high school -- 28% (13 of 47) and the elementary level -- 36% (16 of 44). At the junior high school level, however, mathematics was perceived as the best subject by 20% of the respondents. It was difficult, however, for many respondents to identify best subjects, since between 32 and 45 percent of the respondents replied "Don't know" to the question regarding best subjects in the district.

Roanoke-Benson

Language arts and mathematics were viewed as the strongest subjects by 48% (29 of 61) and 25% (15 of 61), respectively at the junior high level; and 40% (26 of 65) and 26% (17 of 65), respectively at the elementary level. At the high school level, the language arts subjects were also viewed as strongest, 33% (23 of 70). Tied for second strongest at the high school level were mathematics and vocational education. Respondents responding "Don't know" for this question ranged from 32% to 49%.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

The subjects perceived as being the best in the district at the elementary and junior high levels were similar. The data indicates that of 69 respondents 51% (35 of 69) indicated that language arts subjects are the strongest at the elementary level, followed by mathematics, 32%. At the junior high school level, 33% (23 of 70) rated language arts as the strongest subject area at that level; this was followed by 27% of the respondents citing mathematics as the strongest subject at that level, and 16% rating science as the best subject at that level. Of those responding to the questions, 28% at the elementary level answered "don't know" and 33% at the junior high school level. At the high school level, a clear majority of respondents, 60% (51 of 85), rated the science courses as the strongest. 25% (21) rated mathematics courses as the strongest at the high school, while 12% (10) rated vocational educational offerings as the strongest courses at this level. the response "Don't know" was given by 25% (21) of the respondents.

El Paso

In El Paso the subjects most often rated strongest at the elementary level were language arts and mathematics, representing 54% (38 of 71) and 18% (13 of 71) of respondents, respectively. At the junior high school level, language arts and mathematics both received the same percentage of votes for being the strongest subject; both represented 29% of the respondents (20 of 68). The "don't know" response category ranged from 30% at the elementary level to 35% at the high school level.

Least Like About the School their Child(ren) Attend

Lowpoint-Washburn

There were very few recurring themes evident in the responses to this question. The most frequent area of commentary pertained to teachers. Approximately 20% of the respondents (22 of 51), indicated that poor teacher attitudes, unconcerned teachers and teachers who were there only to collect a paycheck were what they, the respondents, liked least about the school that their children were attending. Slightly over 20% of the respondents to this question indicated that they did not have children in school, did not know what they liked least, or had no opinion on the question. The remaining respondents made comments reflecting broad areas from inconsistency of the enforcement of rules and regulations to the lack of cleanliness of the facilities.

Toluca

Responses to this question were extremely varied in this district, and themes were not present. The most frequent response (approximately 20% -- 9 of 46) was discipline problems. With regard to discipline, some respondents felt that stricter rules needed to be in place. Poor teacher attitudes were identified as what six (6) respondents least liked about the school their children attended. Other areas identified included limitations in the curriculum as well as concerns with the administration. These and other areas were identified by fewer than 10% of those responding to this question.

Roanoke-Benson

With respect to the question of what respondents least liked about the school their child(ren) attended, there was wide variation in the responses, so that no themes were systematically observed. Slightly under 20% of the seventy-four (74) respondents commented on the teachers as being an issue for them. With respect to this category of response, some respondents felt that teachers with tenure were not as committed to their jobs as they should be; also, some respondents cited poor attitudes on the part of some teachers; other respondents noted that some of the teachers seemed to be burned out. Approximately 20% of the respondents noted that they were unable to answer the question since they had no children in school presently. Two areas that were noted by slightly over 10% of the respondents were limitations of the present curriculum and dissatisfaction with the class sizes at the school their child(ren) attended. A variety of other concerns were cited by the remaining respondents.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

Of the 82 individuals who responded to the question regarding what they least liked about the school their child(ren) attended, approximately 30% indicated either that they did not know, that the question was not applicable to them, or that they did not have children attending school currently. For the remaining respondents, answers varied widely and as in other districts, clear cut themes did not emerge. However, concerns with teachers' attitudes as well as concerns with the way teachers related to students were the most mentioned of the various responses (16 times). Slightly less than 10% of the 82 respondents indicated that sports was too heavily stressed in the schools that their children attended. Other areas of concern included the perceived limitations with the existing curriculum, uneasiness with the school administrators, and a sense by some respondents that all students were not treated fairly.

El Paso

Responses to the question of what respondents liked least about the school their child(ren) attended did not point to any common themes across the responses. The largest percentage of responses, approximately 23%, representing 20 of the 88 responses, were essentially non-answers. This group of respondents indicated that they could not answer the question for a variety of reasons: they had no children in school; they were unable to answer the question; the question was not applicable to them, or they had no opinion regarding the question. Slightly over 20% of the remaining 68 responses indicated that some of the teachers concerned them. They cited poor attitudes of teachers, lack of commitment by some teachers, and the tenure of teachers as areas that concerned them. Other areas identified as problematic were discipline problems at the school and limitations in the existing curriculum.

Most Like About the School their Child(ren) Attend

Lowpoint-Washburn

Fifty-one individuals responded to the query regarding what they liked best about the school their child(ren) attended. Of those, seven (7) noted that they were unable to answer the question either because they had no children attending school, they simply did not know, or they felt the question was not applicable to them. Three themes seemed to emerge clearly from the responses. The first focused on the element of size. Here, respondents made reference to the small size of the district, or the small size of the school, and at time the small size of classes. Small class sizes were viewed as providing opportunities for students to receive individual assistance and more focused attention from teachers. The second relates to the teaching staff. Slightly over 30% (16) of the respondents, indicated that the teachers who taught their child(ren) were caring and concerned teachers. This characteristic was most frequently noted for elementary teachers. Respondents sometimes elaborated that teachers took time to assist students and were there to encourage students. The third theme related to the location of the school. The fact that the school was close to home was mentioned as being important by slightly over 10% of the respondents. Various other responses were also given, but generally not by more than three respondents.

Toluca

Within this district, 46 individuals chose to respond to this question. Of these, nine indicated that either there was nothing that they liked about the school their child(ren) attended, they had no opinion, or that they did not have any

children in school at this time. Of the remaining 37, approximately 30% (12) indicated that what they most liked about the school their child(ren) attended was the size of the school. In this instance, the size dealt primarily with class size and the student teacher ratio that the small class size afforded. Again, the opportunity for concentrated attention from the teacher was viewed as a major plus for small class sizes. Additionally, slightly over 20% (9) noted teacher care and concern as what they liked most about the school their child(ren) attended. Finally, the next most frequently occurring response was oriented around the theme of proximity. Respondents seemed to like the idea that the school was close to home and that it was in the town in which they resided. Again, various other responses were provided, but never by more than three individuals.

Roanoke-Benson

Of the 80 individuals who identified what they liked best about the school their child(ren) attended, just under 20% (14) indicated either that they had no children in school, they did not see the question as applicable to them, they did not like anything about the school their child(ren) attended, or they did not know what they liked. Based on the remaining responses, there were three clearly identifiable themes. The first is related to the issue of size. Here, respondents mentioned the small schools or district, though the majority focused on the small class sizes. The small class sizes were seen as very positive, as that circumstance provided opportunities for students to receive needed attention since the teacher student ratio was relatively low. The second major theme which emerged from the data relates to the teachers. Approximately 20% of the respondents (18) indicated that the teachers at the school(s) their child(ren) attended demonstrated their care and concern for the students. Not only were teachers viewed as caring and concerned, but other respondents indicated the highly qualified teachers who work at the schools. This third theme was shared by nine respondents. Other responses were provided, but by usually 2 to 4 individuals, but mostly by 2 or one individual.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

Of the 118 respondents who provided their views on what they liked most about the school their child(ren) attended, two themes emerged rather strongly, with a third showing a trend, but not as strongly as the others. The major theme revolved around the size of the school or district. Additionally, within the theme of size, class size emerged as a positive feature of the schools being evaluated, and in conjunction to small class sizes, mention was made of the ratio of students to teacher and the extent to which small classes, and a small student to teacher ratio created an atmosphere conducive for students to receive individual attention from teachers. The second theme which emerged relates to teachers in the schools.

Approximately 15% of the respondents indicated that the care and concern that teachers demonstrated to the students was what they liked most about the school their child(ren) attended. Teachers were reported to care sufficiently about students that they spent extra time providing assistance for students. The final theme which emerged was that of location of the school. The fact that the school was in a small town and more importantly, that it was in close proximity to homes, this was seen as positive. Other responses were given, but with much less frequency that those shared here.

El Paso

Of the 84 respondents who chose to share what they liked best about the school their child(ren) attended, 15 indicated that they had no children in school, had no opinion on the question, could not answer the question, or that the question was not applicable to them. Of the remaining 69 responses, the overwhelming majority -- 33-- noted that what they liked best about the school their child(ren) attended was the care and concern or the qualifications of the teachers. The only other response that came close to this answer focused on the size of the school or the classroom. Twenty respondents indicated what they liked most about the school their child(ren) attended was the fact that the school was small or that the classrooms were sufficiently small, thus allowing for the children to receive added attention from the teachers. It should be noted that some respondents provided more than one response to the question.

Biggest Problem Facing their District

Lowpoint-Washburn

In responding to this question, citizens (25 of 65) from this district identified money as the major problem facing the district. In stating this, some respondents qualified their responses by noting that there was insufficient money for providing the range of courses that should be provided. Additionally, some perceived that monies were currently being misspent. The second most frequently mentioned problem was discipline. The overwhelming majority of individuals who mentioned this as a problem perceived that discipline was not sufficiently firm, and that at times, disciplinary measures were not consistent. The curriculum as well as teachers were tied for third place in terms of being significant problems in the district. With regard to the curriculum, most who perceived it as a problem noted that the current curriculum is too narrow and does not adequately meet the needs of students. With regard to teachers, the perception was that the teachers are not sufficiently committed to the students and that they do not assist the students

sufficiently. Other areas perceived as major problems in the district include drugs and alcohol, and the facilities.

Toluca

Of those responding to this question, the majority (36 of 74) indicated that money was the biggest problem facing the district at this time. Again, a lack of funds to meet state mandates was cited by some respondents. In addition to money, low enrollments were viewed as a major problem for the district -- mentioned by 21 individuals. This problem, to some extent, was viewed as precipitating yet another major problem, that of a limited curriculum. Students were viewed as having few choices, not being exposed to the types of courses that they need to prepare them for college, and not being on par with students in other schools -- particularly at the secondary level. Tied with the curriculum as the third major problem facing the district, was the administration of the district. Several respondents (11) mentioned concerns about the administration. Receiving the vote for the fourth most major problem facing the district was the teachers. As in other districts, teachers were perceived as having poor attitudes, low morale and not being very concerned for the students. The issue of consolidation was also viewed as the major problem facing the district. Taxes were also mentioned, along with the size of the district.

Roanoke-Benson

As with Lowpoint-Washburn, money was overwhelmingly viewed as the biggest problem in the district (67 of 108 respondents mentioned money), as compared to the second place problem -- the curriculum and teachers (each mentioned by 13 respondents). The lack of funds was noted repeatedly. With respect to the curriculum, again, a similar theme prevailed in this district as did in Lowpoint-Washburn -- the curriculum as it stands is too limited to meet the needs of the students today. Teachers were viewed as not very dedicated and not very concerned about the students. A fourth problem mentioned was drugs and alcohol, which was seen as the major problem in the district by seven respondents. Other problem areas identified included low enrollments, the school board, and students' attitudes and behavior.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

Though over twenty-five different perceived "major" district problems were enumerated by respondents, there were, as with the preceding districts, a few which emerged as front runners. Consistent with all other districts, money was

perceived to be the district's biggest problem by most of the respondents (47 of 119). Issues with money paralleled those mentioned previously, with regard to limited money limiting curriculum offerings and inappropriate appropriation and disbursement of funds. The second most mentioned problem was that of inadequate facilities. Time and again, the lack of space at the grade school was mentioned (17 times). Teachers were also viewed as a significant problem in this district; again, some concerns emerged regarding teachers' commitment to students, and their competency was questioned by some respondents. Additionally, the curriculum was seen as a major problem for the district, primarily in the area of limited offerings for meeting the educational needs of students. Paralleling the problem of the facilities was the problem of overcrowding at the grade school. Drugs and alcohol were also seen as major problems in the district, but was perceived as such by only 9 respondents. Other perceived problems in the district included discipline, the issue of consolidation and taxes.

El Paso

Money was rated as the biggest problem facing the district (mentioned by 48 of 109 respondents). Again, a major concern was lack of funds. Here a lack of funds was seen as contributing to another problem -- the curriculum -- mentioned as the biggest problem by twelve individuals. Limited monetary resources was viewed as negatively impacting the range of courses that could be offered as well as impacting on the salaries of teachers -- good teachers could not be kept due to the district's inability to pay attractive, competitive salaries. The problem which ranked third as the district's biggest problem was drugs and alcohol. The fourth most mentioned problem was centered on the teachers, who were perceived as not being fully committed. Inadequate facilities was also another problem mentioned by several respondents.

What the District Should Be Doing Now that it is Not Doing

Lowpoint-Washburn

There were no threads running through responses (n = 49) regarding what the district should be currently doing that it is not already doing. Virtually all responses were singular responses, indicating no common themes running through responses. Responses ranged from ideas for changing or upgrading the curriculum, such as providing more vocational education courses and more computer courses, to making policies regarding where administrators and teachers need to live if they work for the Lowpoint-Washburn district.

Toluca

From the responses of the 62 individuals who provided suggestions, three themes seemed to emerge. In this question, the numbers of individuals proposing similar suggestions were not overwhelming; however, the three areas to be presented were mentioned more frequently than any others. First, close to 30% of the respondents suggested the need to seriously consider consolidation, or at the very least, a reorganization of the district. Respondents indicated that the low enrollments and limited fiscal resources demanded a hard look, and potential steps toward consolidation. A second suggestion made was that there needed to be more communication within the district. Several respondents felt that important decisions were made in the district without their knowledge; information regarding decisions seemed to follow the decisions, rather than precede them. Finally, between 10% and 20% of the respondents suggested that a change of administration is needed for the district.

Roanoke-Benson

At least two of the themes which emerged from the responses (n = 57) of the respondents from Toluca seemed to be evident in the responses from Roanoke-Benson. First, the need to consider consolidation was mentioned by several respondents (over 10%, but less than 25%). These suggestions were in the form of what may be coming "down the road" and a suggestion that the district begin exploring now what consolidation options will be most beneficial for the students in the district in the long run. Also, the need for increased communication with parents was mentioned repeatedly. In identifying the need for increased communication, teachers were also seen as needing to be more fully informed. Some respondents felt that the administration needed to spend money more wisely by identifying priorities and placing the needs of the students ahead of all other needs. Finally, the area which received the most suggestions -- over 25% of the respondents -- for change was the curriculum. Here, this broad category of the curriculum encompassed suggested changes in areas such foreign language offerings, gifted programs, college preparatory courses, and others.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

Responses of the 77 individuals from Minonk-Dana-Rutland (MDR) were quite varied. Like Lowpoint-Washburn, there was a very wide range of suggestions provided by the respondents. Slightly over 10% of the respondents indicated that curriculum changes were needed in the MDR schools. For example, the need to upgrade the offerings in the area of computer skills and literacy was the most mentioned curriculum modification needed. A similar percentage of participants

saw a need to address problems with the some of the teachers in MDR. The responses clearly indicated that respondents perceive older, tenured teachers to be less motivated and less concerned and conscientious than teachers who do not fit this description. A couple respondents went so far as to suggest that the idea of tenure is probably not a very good one. With regard to other areas suggested for district action, the need to consider consolidation was voiced as was the need to "go back to basics", among many other suggestions.

El Paso

Seventy-three individuals provided suggestions on what the district should be doing that it is not currently doing. There were five areas that emerged as representing themes. Again, as with the other districts, the suggestions carried no clear mandate since the overall percentages of the respondents who made suggestions in each of the areas were not overwhelming. The suggestion given most frequently was that communication with parents and the community needed to increase. There was a sense from the responses that individuals felt that they were uninformed regarding certain facets of district activities and decisions that they felt they were entitled to be apprised of on the basis of their status as taxpayers and/or parents. In addition to increased communication, at least 15% of the respondents suggested that the district needed to increase its offerings in the area of vocational education. This suggestion was separate from another recurring suggestion that the current curriculum needed to be upgraded. Again, the areas in which upgrading was suggested varied widely. Another recurring suggestion was that the district needed to be more diligent in screening potential teaching candidates and be more vigorous in monitoring and evaluating the progress of teachers. There was a sense in the responses that some teachers who have received tenure are not as effective as they should be. Finally, the need to consider consolidation, if not immediately, but in anticipation of the future, also emerged as a theme, albeit a weak theme, in this district.

In What Ways are the Schools in the District Particularly Good

Lowpoint-Washburn

Of the forty-three respondents answering this question, more lauded the elementary school than any other area of the school. Following closely behind this response was the identification of quality teachers as an area in which the schools in the district were particularly good; the elementary teachers were singled out by several respondents. Not only were the teachers acclaimed as being "good", they were also described as caring and concerned about students. A third strength of the schools in the district cited by the respondents is the size of the classes; the

perception is that small classes afford the opportunity for teachers to attend to the needs of individual students. Finally, strong sports was viewed as a plus for the schools in Lowpoint-Washburn.

Toluca

From the responses of the 51 individuals who answered this question, three themes seemed to emerge. The quality of the teachers, first and foremost, is viewed as the strength of the schools in Toluca. The teachers were described by many as concerned about the welfare of the students. Additionally, small class sizes were praised since they were viewed as accommodating individual attention to students by the teacher. Finally, a few respondents mentioned that the cleanliness of the district facilities was to be commended.

Roanoke-Benson

Though many indicators of the strong points were given by the 61 individuals who provided responses, the most frequently cited indicator of a particular good element in the schools was the high caliber of teachers in the schools in the districts. Most teachers are described as being concerned about students as well as helpful in assisting students. Additionally, the small class sizes were rated as one of the particularly positive features of the district; the perception that smaller class sizes enhanced the opportunity for individual attention emerged from the comments provided. Two unique themes emerged for this district. First, several respondents spoke to the good communication which exists between the school and the home. Good rapport with teachers was provided as an example of this good rapport. Finally, participants mentioned the strong programs which were available, given the size of the district. The programs to which respondents referred included academic programs for the gifted, the music program, as well as sports and other extra-curricular programs.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

For the 82 respondents from MDR, there was only one clear, decisive theme emerging from the responses given. That theme is consistent with one which appeared in all other districts -- that of the quality of the teachers in the MDR schools -- mentioned by over 30% of the respondents. Teachers were described as concerned, available, good, and excellent. A couple respondents went so far as to note that some teachers went back to school so as to keep abreast of changes occurring in the area of education; this was viewed very positively. Two other noted positive features in the schools in MDR were the quality of the

administrators and the size of the classrooms. Again, as with respondents in other districts, the small size of the classrooms was seen as an opportunity for students to receive special attention if the need arose.

El Paso

The respondents from El Paso viewed the majority of their teachers as excellent or good, and indicated that their teachers, for the most part, care for and are concerned about the students in the districts. Again, the small class sizes were mentioned as a strong point of the schools in the district as they served to increase the likelihood that students could receive the individual attention as was needed. The music program (no level of school indicated) was cited by several respondents as exceptional. Co-curricular activities were also cited as representing a particularly strong aspect of the district in the sense that because of the size of the schools, the range of activities available is commendable; also, again because of the size of the schools, students had more opportunities to get involved in Co-curricular activities than they might be able to at larger buildings. Also, sports were mentioned as being strong in the district.

How Parents, Community and School Can Work Together

Lowpoint-Washburn

Suggestions regarding how parents, community, and school could work together included the need for better communication with parents from the school. Several respondents noted that they are not always apprised of critical information that they feel they should be aware of. Additionally, respondents suggested the need for systematic parent-teacher conferences to receive updates regarding the academic progress of their children. Finally, some respondents expressed the need for the School Board to listen to parents; the tone of this suggestion seemed to imply that the respondents are interested in shared governance, where they can actively participate in the decision-making in the district, at least at the level of being provided the opportunity to make suggestions that will be seriously considered. Forty-eight individuals provided responses.

Toluca

Of the suggestions provided by the sixty respondents from Toluca, the suggestion most frequently given was to hold more meetings in order to inform parents of important district events and upcoming decisions or action items. Additionally, the organization of a Parent Teacher Association or Organization to

inform parents was suggested by several respondents. Respondents also called for greater involvement by parents, and suggested that overtures be made by the schools to solicit parental involvement and also that parents take the initiative to become more involved in school related activities.

Roanoke-Benson

There were three primary suggestions given by the 56 respondents from Roanoke-Benson. The suggestion made most frequently was the need to organize a Parent Teacher Organization/Association. The second major suggestion was that more communication between the school and the parents and community as a whole was needed. The responses indicated that parents and community members needed to be better informed about the important district issues and decisions that needed to be made. Several respondents suggested that meetings could be held so as to facilitate the information sharing and communication among the groups.

Minonk-Dana-Rutland

The suggestions provided by respondents (n = 81) from Minonk-Dana-Rutland for parents, community, and schools to work together focused on four major activities. An equal number of individuals (15) each suggested increased parental involvement and the need for better communication and information to parents and the community. With regard to parental involvement, suggestions were made that volunteers be solicited by school personnel, and that parents involve themselves in the activities of the school so that they can become cognizant of what transpires in the school setting. The suggestion for more communication and the need to inform parents carried specific examples of how such communication and information sharing could be achieved. The use of newsletters and/or even the local newspaper were suggested as avenues for sharing information. Just over 10% of the respondents suggested meetings for disseminating information; some who made that suggestion cautioned that meetings should be arranged with parents' work schedules in mind. Some suggested monthly open meetings. Another suggestion, made by just under 10% of the respondents was that committees or task forces could be organized to study critical educational problems in the district. Some respondents suggested that such committees and task forces be comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and students.

El Paso

Suggestions for parents, community, and schools to work together were provided by 63 respondents from El Paso. There were four major suggestions made by these individuals. The most frequent suggestion was that parental involvement needed to increase. Some suggestions regarding the form that increased involvement could take included parents visiting the schools to become better aware of what was occurring in the schools. Additionally, it was suggested that parents could volunteer to assist with various school activities, including volunteering to serve as teacher aides as well as helping with extra-curricular activities. The third suggestion for enhancing the working relationship among the three groups was for increased communication and sharing between the school -- including the School Board-- and the parents and community as a whole. Some respondents alluded to the need for the school personnel to listen to parents, because parents could potentially make valuable contributions. Again, the idea of attending to parents' and community members' views speaks to the desire for shared governance on the part of some of the respondents. Finally, to support this stance, respondents also suggested the need for informational meetings and also noted that parents and community members, at large, should be invited to School Board meetings, both as a means of being updated on important school business as well as to receive an opportunity to provide input on matters for which decisions need to be made.

Summary of the Findings from the Open-Ended Questions

The responses to the questions provide a snapshot view of the perspectives and perceptions of some of the residents of the five districts which are the central focus of this study. There appears to be sensitive issues that will need to be addressed by district administrators, school personnel, and parents as difficult decisions are to be made. One consistency across all districts is the seeming praise for small class sizes and small schools which respondents seem to equate with the enhancement of an atmosphere conducive for the provision of individual attention to students as needed. However, some respondents expressed concerns with small schools and districts, pointing out that the curriculum offerings are limited, and students may not be receiving the breadth of educational opportunities that place them in a competitive situation for college or even vocational opportunities after high school. Some respondents are concerned with "going back to the basics", while others are concerned that the basics still exist, and the districts are not abreast of technological changes that demand a different type of "basic" education for today's students.

In the area of staffing, specifically as it relates to teachers, there was a clear distinction being made by respondents regarding their perceptions of the quality of

teachers in the various districts. In all districts, it was evident that a significant proportion of the teachers are viewed as qualified, motivated, and dedicated. The teaching staff was the number one gauge of how schools in the five districts are particularly good. However, poor teacher attitudes and a lack of commitment were also two charges levelled against some segment of the teaching staff in each of the five districts. There seemed to be consistency in the perception of lack of commitment and lack of concern and the length of time the teacher has been in the district and the tenure status of the teacher. This perception is one that the administrators in the districts need to consider as school improvement efforts begin. Throughout the comments, administrative policy and decisions were also challenged; this reality also needs to be addressed.

From the open-ended comments, there seems to be some degree of awareness on the part of respondents that consolidation may need to be addressed in each of the five districts. However, based on the comments of these respondents it is also clear that this issue is a delicate one. Consolidation considerations need to be dealt with in a sensitive, diplomatic way and district personnel, seeking and providing opportunities for parents and other community members to share their fears, concerns and views regarding any potential consolidation efforts.

Finally, actions on the basis of this report should carefully consider respondents' views regarding how parents, school and community can work together. Many respondents implied that their views are neither solicited or wanted. Again, the desire for shared governance was evident in the suggestions made by the respondents and should be considered as each district continues its efforts to improve its schools and the learning opportunities for its students.

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School Improvement Survey

Appendix A - The School Improvement Survey

Directions

This survey contains three sections. The first section asks you several general questions about children you might have had attend a school in the district. Section two solicits demographic information so that we might better understand your responses. The final section seeks your opinion concerning the quality of that education, and ways that it might be improved.

Questions may ask you to choose among several choices or to write in a short response. Please use an **X** to mark your choice in questions having choices. For those questions needing a written response please feel free to write as much as you feel is required for us to fully understand your answer. Your answers are anonymous, so please do not write your name on any sheet of this survey. Thank you for your assistance!

General Information About Your Children

1. How many years have you lived in your current school district? _____ Years

2. Do you currently have children in school in this district? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   2a. If **Yes**, please answer below for each child enrolled:

Child	Current School (Mark one only)	Is this child a Special Education Student?
#1	☐ Elementary ☐ Junior High ☐ High School	Spec Ed Student? (Y/N) __ ☐ In this district ☐ In another district
#2	☐ Elementary ☐ Junior High ☐ High School	Spec Ed Student? (Y/N) __ ☐ In this district ☐ In another district
#3	☐ Elementary ☐ Junior High ☐ High School	Spec Ed Student? (Y/N) __ ☐ In this district ☐ In another district
#4	☐ Elementary ☐ Junior High ☐ High School	Spec Ed Student? (Y/N) __ ☐ In this district ☐ In another district

3. Have you previously had children enrolled in this district? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   3a. If **Yes**, how many years has it been since your last child attended school in this district? _____ Years

School Improvement Survey

General Information About You

1. Are you the chief wage earner in your household? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Are you currently:

   ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Separated ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

3. What year you were born? 19 __ __

4. If you are married, what year was your spouse born? 19 __ __

5. Please circle the last grade or level you completed in school?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5 6
(Elementary)	**(High School)**	**(College)**	**(Graduate School)**

6. What is the occupation of the chief wage earner in your household?

   ☐ Professional or Business
   ☐ Clerical or Sales
   ☐ Bank or Insurance
   ☐ Manual Labor or Trade
   ☐ Farm or Ag Business
   ☐ Other _____

7. Is the chief wage earner in your household employed:

   ☐ Full Time ☐ Part Time ☐ Retired ☐ Not Employed

8. Do you live in a house, apartment, or trailer?

   ☐ House ☐ Apartment ☐ Trailer

9. Do you own or rent your house, apartment or trailer? ☐ Own ☐ Rent

10. What is the estimated total annual income in your household?

    ☐ Less than $9,999
    ☐ $10,000 to $14,999
    ☐ $15,000 to $19,999
    ☐ $20,000 to $24,999
    ☐ $25,000 to $29,999
    ☐ $30,000 to $34,999
    ☐ $35,000 to $39,999
    ☐ $40,000 to $44,999
    ☐ $45,000 to $50,000
    ☐ Over $50,000

School Improvement Survey

Your Opinions of School District Quality

1. **Students are often given grades of: A (Excellent), B (Very Good), C (Average), D (Below Average), and F (Failing) to indicate the quality of their work. Using these grades, please rate the following aspects of your school district (only check (✓) one box per line):**

	A	B	C	D	F	Don't Know
The Elementary School						
The Junior High School						
The High School						
The School Buildings						
The School Board						
The Administration						
The Teachers						
The Academic Programs						
The Vocational Programs						
The Co-Curricular Programs						

2. Do you think the **Elementary School** curriculum in your community meets today's needs, or should it be changed?

   ☐ Needs to be changed ☐ Already meets today's needs ☐ Don't know

3. Do you think the **Junior High School** curriculum in your community meets today's needs, or should it be changed?

   ☐ Needs to be changed ☐ Already meets today's needs ☐ Don't know

4. Do you think the **High School** curriculum in your community meets today's needs, or should it be changed?

   ☐ Needs to be changed ☐ Already meets today's needs ☐ Don't know

5. How important are co-curricular activities such as school band, dramatics, sports, and the school newspaper to a young person's education?

   ☐ Very important ☐ Fairly Important
   ☐ Not too important ☐ Not important at all

School Improvement Survey

6. In general, do you think **Elementary** school children in your district's schools are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

   ☐ Too hard ☐ About right ☐ Not hard enough ☐ Don't know

7. In general, do you think **Junior High** school children in your district's schools are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

   ☐ Too hard ☐ About right ☐ Not hard enough ☐ Don't know

8. In general, do you think **High School** children in your district's schools are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

   ☐ Too hard ☐ About right ☐ Not hard enough ☐ Don't know

9. Please write in the names of the subjects you consider the **weakest** in your district?
   9a. In the **Elementary** grades:

   9b. In the **Junior High** grades:

   9c. In the **High School** grades:

10. Please write in the names of the subjects you consider the **strongest** in your district?
    10a. In the **Elementary** grades:

    10b. In the **Junior High** grades:

    10c. In the **High School** grades:

School Improvement Survey

11. Some schools allow students to progress through the school system at their own pace, without regard to the usual grade levels. Would you favor or oppose such a plan for your school district?

☐ Favor ☐ Oppose ☐ Unsure

12. How would you feel about extending the school day by one hour in your district?

☐ Favor ☐ Oppose ☐ Unsure

13. Your district's high school prepares students for both careers and college. In your opinion, does this high school:

☐ Need more emphasis on college preparation
☐ Need more emphasis on career preparation
☐ Have the right mix between college and career preparation
☐ Unsure

14. How do you feel about student discipline in your school district?

☐ Too strict ☐ Just about right ☐ Not strict enough ☐ Don't know

15. Other than by talking with members of your family, where do you get most of your information about your school district. Please mark all that apply.

☐ Newspapers ☐ Neighbors or Friends ☐ School Newsletters
☐ Radio or T.V. ☐ School Employees ☐ School Meetings
☐ Other: _____

16. Do you feel that the use of alcohol (beer, wine, and other liquor) by students in your district's schools is a problem?

☐ Very Serious ☐ Fairly Serious ☐ Not too Serious ☐ Don't Know

17. Do you feel that the use of drugs by students in your district's schools is a problem?

☐ Very Serious ☐ Fairly Serious ☐ Not too Serious ☐ Don't Know

18. How many educational changes are being tried in your Community?

☐ Too Many ☐ About Right ☐ Not Enough ☐ Don't Know

School Improvement Survey

19. In the last 5 years has your overall attitude toward the schools in your district become more favorable or less favorable?

☐ More Favorable ☐ No Change ☐ Less Favorable ☐ No Opinion

20. Listed here are factors that might be considered in choosing a public school for a child, assuming that a free choice of public schools was allowed. Indicate whether you would consider each factor as very important, fairly important, not too important at all in choosing a local school (only check (✓) one box per line):

	Very Important	Fairly Important	Not Important
Quality of the Teaching Staff			
Maintenance of Student Discipline			
Curriculum (Subjects)			
Size of School			
Size of Classes			
Record of High School Students going to College or Getting a Job			
Grades (or test scores) of Students			
Convenience of School Location			
Co-Curricular Activities (eg. Clubs, Band, Chorus, Theater)			
Athletic Programs			

21. What do you like **least** about the school your children attend?

22. What do you like **most** about the school your children attend?

23. Over the past five years have the public schools in your district:

☐ Improved ☐ Stayed the same ☐ Gotten Worse ☐ Don't Know

School Improvement Survey

24. Would you favor or oppose extending the opportunity of full-day kindergarten to parents of kindergarten-aged children?

☐ Favor ☐ Oppose ☐ No Opinion

25. Do you feel a child should be retained (not promoted one year) without parent consent if the school recommends that the child should be retained?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

26. In what size school (number of students) do you think that **Elementary** students today get the best education?

☐ Under 200 ☐ 200 to 400 ☐ 400 to 600 ☐ 600 to 800 ☐ Over 800

27. In what size school (number of students) do you think that **Junior High** students today get the best education?

☐ Under 200 ☐ 200 to 400 ☐ 400 to 600 ☐ 600 to 800 ☐ Over 800

28. In what size school (number of students) do you think that **High School** students today get the best education?

☐ Under 200 ☐ 200 to 400 ☐ 400 to 600 ☐ 600 to 800 ☐ Over 800

29. Would you like to send your children to different public schools?

☐ Yes ☐ No

29a. If **Yes**, which other district's schools would you want to send them to? (check only one, and be sure not to check your current district):

☐ El Paso ☐ Minonk-Dana-Rutland ☐ Toluca
☐ Lowpoint-Washburn ☐ Roanoke-Benson

30. In your view what are the biggest problems facing your school district?

31. Suppose that your district's School Board said they needed more money. As you feel at this time, would you (choose one only):

☐ Raise taxes ☐ Cut school Programs ☐ Seek reorganization

School Improvement Survey

32. What, if anything, do you think your school district should be doing that it is not doing?

33. In what ways are the schools in your district particularly **good**?

34. What suggestions would you make to get the parents, the community, and the school to work together to improve education in your school district?

35. Please add any additional comments you would like to make about your school district below.

Thank you for your assistance!

Appendix B - Rate of Response by District
General Information About Your Children

1. How many years have you lived in your current school district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Mean	30.0	29.7	31.2	31.7	34.1	31.2
Std. Dev.	19.5	18.6	18.2	17.3	19.9	18.6
Total Respondents	173	84	156	149	91	653

2. Do you currently have children in school in this district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	39.3%	39.6%	36.2%	40.9%	32.6%	38.1%
No	56.3%	54.9%	60.7%	55.5%	64.2%	58.0%
(No Response)	4.4%	5.5%	3.1%	3.7%	3.2%	3.9%
Total Respondents	175	86	158	158	92	669

2a. If Yes, please answer below for each child enrolled:
What school is Child #1 in?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Elementary	15.3%	17.6%	13.5%	14.6%	9.5%	14.2%
Junior High	9.8%	5.5%	9.2%	13.4%	9.5%	9.9%
High School	14.2%	15.4%	12.9%	12.8%	13.7%	13.6%
(No Response)	60.7%	61.5%	64.4%	59.1%	67.4%	62.2%
Total Respondents	72	35	58	67	31	263

Is Child #1 in Special Education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	1.6%	1.1%	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	1.4%
No	16.4%	18.7%	17.8%	23.2%	10.5%	17.8%
(No Response)	82.0%	80.2%	82.2%	73.2%	89.5%	80.7%
Total Respondents	33	18	29	44	10	134

Location of Child #1 Special Ed.

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
This District	1.6%	1.1%	0.0%	6.1%	0.0%	2.0%
Another District	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
(No Response)	98.4%	98.9%	100.0%	93.9%	100.0%	98.0%
Total Respondents	3	1	0	10	0	14

What school is Child #2 in?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Elementary	9.3%	14.3%	11.7%	10.4%	4.2%	10.1%
Junior High	11.5%	5.5%	4.3%	7.3%	3.2%	6.9%
High School	3.3%	8.8%	4.3%	6.1%	3.2%	4.9%
(No Response)	76.0%	71.4%	79.8%	76.2%	89.5%	78.2%
Total Respondents	44	26	33	39	10	152

Is Child #2 in Special Education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	1.1%	2.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.3%
No	9.3%	13.2%	9.8%	14.6%	4.2%	10.5%
(No Response)	89.6%	84.6%	89.0%	84.1%	94.7%	88.2%
Total Respondents	19	14	18	26	5	82

Location of Child #2 Special Ed.

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
This District	0.5%	1.1%	1.2%	3.7%	0.0%	1.4%
Another District	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.3%
(No Response)	98.9%	98.9%	98.8%	96.3%	98.9%	98.3%
Total Respondents	2	1	2	6	1	12

What school is Child #3 in?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Elementary	3.8%	2.2%	4.9%	5.5%	6.3%	4.6%
Junior High	3.3%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	1.6%
High School	0.5%	2.2%	0.6%	2.4%	0.0%	1.1%
(No Response)	92.3%	94.5%	93.3%	90.9%	93.7%	92.7%
Total Respondents	14	5	11	15	6	51

Is Child #3 in Special Education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	1.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%
No	3.3%	3.3%	3.1%	6.1%	3.2%	3.9%
(No Response)	95.6%	96.7%	95.7%	93.3%	96.8%	95.4%
Total Respondents	8	3	7	11	3	32

Location of Child #3 Special Ed.

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
This District	1.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%
Another District	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
(No Response)	98.9%	100.0%	98.8%	99.4%	100.0%	99.3%
Total Respondents	2	0	2	1	0	5

What school is Child #4 in?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Elementary	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	1.2%	2.1%	1.0%
Junior High	1.1%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
High School	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
(No Response)	97.3%	98.9%	98.8%	98.8%	97.9%	98.3%
Total Respondents	5	1	2	2	2	12

Is Child #4 in Special Education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.1%
No	1.1%	0.0%	0.6%	1.2%	0.0%	0.7%
(No Response)	98.9%	100.0%	99.4%	98.8%	98.9%	99.1%
Total Respondents	2	0	1	2	1	6

Location of Child #4 Special Ed.

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
This District	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Another District	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	0.1%
(No Response)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.9%	99.9%
Total Respondents	0	0	0	0	1	1

3. Have you previously had children enrolled in this district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	48.1%	49.5%	52.8%	40.9%	58.9%	49.1%
No	42.1%	41.8%	38.7%	47.6%	32.6%	41.2%
(No Response)	9.8%	8.8%	8.6%	11.6%	8.4%	9.6%
Total Respondents	165	83	149	145	87	629

3a. If Yes, how many years has it been since your last child attended school in this district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Mean	13.9	12.4	12.1	12.2	13.5	12.8
Std. Dev.	10.0	9.6	11.9	8.7	10.4	10.3
Total Respondents	80	43	82	59	51	315

General Information About You

1. Are you the chief wage earner in your household?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	47.0%	49.5%	47.9%	46.3%	58.9%	49.0%
No	47.0%	45.1%	44.2%	43.9%	31.6%	43.2%
(No Response)	6.0%	5.5%	8.0%	9.8%	9.5%	7.8%
Total Respondents	172	86	150	148	86	642

2. Are you currently:

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Single	7.1%	5.5%	7.4%	7.9%	11.6%	7.8%
Married	75.4%	83.5%	79.8%	79.3%	73.7%	78.2%
Separated	2.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
Divorced	3.8%	1.1%	1.8%	1.8%	1.1%	2.2%
Widowed	8.2%	7.7%	7.4%	5.5%	9.5%	7.5%
(No Response)	3.3%	2.2%	3.1%	5.5%	4.2%	3.7%
Total Respondents	177	89	158	155	91	670

3. What year were you born?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Mean	1941	1942	1941	1942	1938	1941
Std. Dev.	16.3	15.8	16.3	16.7	18.5	16.6
Total Respondents	173	89	155	153	89	659

4. If you are married, what year was your spouse born?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Mean	1942	1944	1942	1942	1939	1942
Std. Dev.	14.6	14.3	14.5	15.3	15.7	14.8
Total Respondents	135	75	129	126	67	532

5. Please circle the last grade or level you completed in school?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Elem-1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Elem-2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Elem-3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Elem-4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Elem-5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Elem-6	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Elem-7	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%
Elem-8	2.2%	4.4%	3.1%	4.9%	2.1%	3.3%
High-9	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.7%
High-10	3.8%	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%	2.1%	1.9%
High-11	1.1%	3.3%	1.2%	0.6%	2.1%	1.4%
High-12	45.4%	45.1%	50.3%	42.1%	40.0%	45.0%
Coll-1	8.7%	6.6%	9.2%	5.5%	10.5%	8.0%
Coll-2	9.3%	9.9%	7.4%	15.9%	17.9%	11.6%
Coll-3	2.2%	3.3%	3.7%	3.0%	2.1%	2.9%
Coll-4	12.0%	16.5%	12.3%	11.6%	14.7%	12.9%
Grad-1	2.7%	3.3%	3.1%	1.8%	1.1%	2.4%
Grad-2	3.8%	3.3%	0.6%	1.8%	1.1%	2.2%
Grad-3	1.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%
Grad-4	0.5%	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.7%
Grad-5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%
Grad-6	0.5%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	1.1%	0.6%
(No Response)	4.9%	4.4%	4.3%	7.3%	5.3%	5.3%
Total Respondents	174	87	156	152	90	659

6. What is the occupation of the chief wage earner in your household?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Professional or Business	20.8%	27.5%	15.3%	24.4%	22.1%	21.4%
Clerical or Sales	4.4%	2.2%	3.7%	3.7%	3.2%	3.6%
Bank or Insurance	2.7%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	2.1%	1.3%
Manual Labor or Trade	21.3%	26.4%	18.4%	14.6%	24.2%	20.1%
Farm or Ag Business	21.3%	19.8%	32.5%	25.6%	15.8%	24.0%
Other	9.3%	4.4%	16.0%	15.9%	13.7%	12.4%
(No Response)	20.2%	19.8%	13.5%	15.2%	18.9%	17.2%
Total Respondents	146	73	141	139	77	576

7. Is the chief wage earner in your household employed:

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Full Time	66.7%	64.8%	71.2%	68.9%	60.0%	67.1%
Part Time	4.4%	3.3%	1.2%	2.4%	4.2%	3.0%
Retired	23.0%	25.3%	22.1%	18.3%	28.4%	22.7%
Not Employed	1.1%	2.2%	1.2%	0.6%	1.1%	1.1%
(No Response)	4.9%	4.4%	4.3%	9.8%	6.3%	6.0%
Total Respondents	174	87	156	148	89	654

8. Do you live in a house, apartment, or trailer?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
House	93.4%	96.7%	91.4%	93.9%	92.6%	93.4%
Apartment	1.6%	1.1%	1.8%	1.2%	1.1%	1.4%
Trailer	2.2%	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%	2.1%	1.4%
(No Response)	2.7%	2.2%	4.3%	4.9%	4.2%	3.7%
Total Respondents	178	89	156	156	91	670

9. Do you own or rent your house, apartment, or trailer?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Own	88.0%	84.6%	80.4%	82.3%	84.2%	83.9%
Rent	7.7%	8.8%	13.5%	9.1%	9.5%	9.8%
(No Response)	4.4%	6.6%	6.1%	8.5%	6.3%	6.3%
Total Respondents	175	85	153	150	89	652

10. What is the estimated total annual income in your household?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Less than $9,999	3.8%	1.1%	4.3%	2.4%	2.1%	3.0%
$10,000 to $14,999	6.0%	3.3%	7.4%	3.7%	10.5%	6.0%
$15,000 to $19,999	4.4%	8.8%	4.3%	4.3%	8.4%	5.5%
$20,000 to $24,999	10.4%	11.0%	9.2%	5.5%	7.4%	8.6%
$25,000 to $29,999	8.7%	6.6%	12.3%	6.7%	11.6%	9.2%
$30,000 to $34,999	10.9%	13.2%	14.1%	14.0%	7.4%	12.2%
$35,000 to $39,999	8.2%	8.8%	6.7%	9.8%	3.2%	7.6%
$40,000 to $44,999	7.7%	8.8%	9.2%	12.8%	6.3%	9.2%
$45,000 to $50,000	10.9%	2.2%	6.7%	9.8%	5.3%	7.8%
Over $50,000	18.0%	18.7%	13.5%	16.5%	14.7%	16.2%
(No Response)	10.9%	17.6%	12.3%	14.6%	23.2%	14.7%
Total Respondents	163	75	143	140	73	594

Your Opinions of School District Quality

1. Students are often given grades of: **A** (Excellent), **B** (Very Good), **C** (Average), **D** (Below Average), and **F** (Failing) to indicate the quality of their work. Using these grades, please rate the following aspects of your school district (only check ( ) one box per line):

The Elementary School

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	16.4%	8.8%	9.8%	12.8%	10.5%	12.2%
B	30.6%	43.2%	32.5%	40.9%	36.8%	36.4%
C	15.8%	16.5%	23.3%	12.2%	16.8%	17.0%
D	0.5%	1.1%	5.5%	0.0%	5.3%	2.3%
F	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Don't Know	24.6%	18.7%	17.8%	20.7%	20.0%	20.7%
(No Response)	12.0%	8.8%	9.8%	13.4%	10.5%	11.2%
Total Respondents	161	83	147	142	85	618

The Junior High School

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	3.8%	1.1%	7.4%	8.5%	7.4%	5.9%
B	20.2%	24.2%	24.5%	33.5%	28.4%	26.0%
C	26.2%	30.8%	33.1%	17.7%	21.1%	25.7%
D	4.4%	9.9%	3.1%	0.6%	7.4%	4.3%
F	0.5%	1.1%	1.2%	0.0%	2.1%	0.9%
Don't Know	29.5%	24.2%	19.6%	23.8%	20.0%	23.9%
(No Response)	15.3%	8.8%	11.0%	15.9%	13.7%	13.4%
Total Respondents	155	83	145	138	82	603

The High School

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	2.7%	1.1%	6.7%	7.9%	8.4%	5.5%
B	16.9%	16.5%	28.2%	26.8%	21.1%	22.4%
C	25.1%	23.1%	27.0%	20.7%	28.4%	24.7%
D	5.5%	17.6%	3.7%	1.8%	9.5%	6.3%
F	1.1%	3.3%	0.6%	0.0%	7.4%	1.9%
Don't Know	33.9%	25.3%	20.9%	26.2%	14.7%	25.3%
(No Response)	14.8%	13.2%	12.9%	16.5%	10.5%	13.9%
Total Respondents	156	79	142	137	85	599

The School Buildings

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	3.3%	1.1%	6.1%	5.5%	8.4%	4.9%
B	21.3%	18.7%	28.8%	28.0%	33.7%	26.0%
C	39.3%	46.2%	38.7%	36.6%	28.4%	37.9%
D	2.2%	9.9%	3.7%	2.4%	6.3%	4.2%
F	0.5%	4.4%	0.6%	0.6%	1.1%	1.1%
Don't Know	18.0%	9.9%	9.8%	11.0%	9.5%	12.2%
(No Response)	15.3%	9.9%	12.3%	15.9%	12.6%	13.6%
Total Respondents	155	82	143	138	83	601

The School Board

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	7.1%	1.1%	3.1%	6.7%	8.4%	5.5%
B	25.7%	18.7%	24.5%	31.7%	14.7%	24.4%
C	21.3%	37.4%	36.8%	26.2%	25.3%	28.7%
D	5.5%	14.3%	9.8%	3.7%	9.5%	7.8%
F	0.0%	1.1%	2.5%	3.0%	17.9%	3.9%
Don't Know	24.6%	18.7%	11.7%	13.4%	10.5%	16.2%
(No Response)	15.8%	8.8%	11.7%	15.2%	13.7%	13.5%
Total Respondents	154	83	144	139	82	602

The Administration

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	9.8%	2.2%	11.0%	7.9%	11.6%	8.9%
B	30.6%	29.7%	24.5%	31.7%	16.8%	27.4%
C	18.0%	25.3%	31.3%	28.7%	20.0%	24.9%
D	2.7%	11.0%	7.4%	3.7%	11.6%	6.3%
F	1.1%	1.1%	1.8%	0.0%	14.7%	2.9%
Don't Know	22.4%	20.9%	11.7%	12.8%	11.6%	15.9%
(No Response)	15.3%	9.9%	12.3%	15.2%	13.7%	13.6%
Total Respondents	155	82	143	139	82	601

The Teachers

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	11.5%	3.3%	8.0%	9.8%	9.5%	8.9%
B	26.8%	27.5%	26.4%	42.1%	31.6%	31.0%
C	24.0%	33.0%	31.3%	18.9%	23.2%	25.6%
D	2.7%	8.8%	4.9%	2.4%	8.4%	4.7%
F	0.5%	1.1%	2.5%	0.0%	2.1%	1.1%
Don't Know	18.0%	16.5%	13.5%	10.4%	11.6%	14.1%
(No Response)	16.4%	9.9%	13.5%	16.5%	13.7%	14.5%
Total Respondents	153	82	141	137	82	595

The Academic Programs

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	3.3%	1.1%	9.8%	7.3%	6.3%	5.9%
B	24.0%	20.9%	25.8%	31.7%	18.9%	25.1%
C	27.3%	35.2%	33.1%	26.2%	24.2%	29.0%
D	5.5%	8.8%	3.7%	3.7%	12.6%	6.0%
F	1.1%	2.2%	0.0%	1.2%	6.3%	1.7%
Don't Know	23.5%	22.0%	15.3%	14.6%	18.9%	18.7%
(No Response)	15.3%	9.9%	12.3%	15.2%	12.6%	13.5%
Total Respondents	155	82	143	139	83	602

The Vocational Programs

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	2.2%	0.0%	4.3%	7.3%	5.3%	4.0%
B	10.9%	13.2%	12.3%	19.5%	14.7%	14.1%
C	21.9%	31.9%	29.4%	28.7%	23.2%	26.7%
D	12.0%	12.1%	9.8%	4.9%	4.2%	8.8%
F	1.1%	1.1%	2.5%	0.6%	13.7%	3.0%
Don't Know	36.1%	29.7%	30.1%	23.8%	25.3%	29.5%
(No Response)	15.8%	12.1%	11.7%	15.2%	13.7%	13.9%
Total Respondents	154	80	144	139	82	599

The Co-Curricular Programs

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
A	3.3%	0.0%	7.4%	6.1%	4.2%	4.6%
B	19.7%	19.8%	20.9%	25.6%	17.9%	21.1%
C	22.4%	27.5%	23.9%	22.6%	24.2%	23.7%
D	3.3%	6.6%	8.0%	4.3%	8.4%	5.7%
F	0.0%	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%	4.2%	1.0%
Don't Know	35.5%	35.2%	27.0%	23.8%	27.4%	29.6%
(No Response)	15.8%	9.9%	12.3%	17.1%	13.7%	14.2%
Total Respondents	154	82	143	136	82	597

2. Do you think the **Elementary School** curriculum in your community meets today's needs, or should it be changed?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Needs to be changed	13.1%	14.3%	20.9%	8.5%	16.8%	14.5%
Already meets today's needs	37.7%	44.0%	35.6%	48.8%	48.4%	42.1%
Don't know	44.3%	35.2%	37.4%	34.1%	28.4%	36.9%
(No Response)	4.9%	6.6%	6.1%	8.5%	6.3%	6.5%
Total Respondents	174	85	153	150	89	651

3. Do you think the **Junior High School** curriculum in your community meets today's needs, or should it be changed?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Needs to be changed	21.9%	36.3%	24.5%	10.4%	25.3%	22.1%
Already meets today's needs	25.1%	26.4%	27.6%	40.9%	36.8%	31.2%
Don't know	46.4%	31.9%	41.7%	39.0%	31.6%	39.7%
(No Response)	6.6%	5.5%	6.1%	9.8%	6.3%	7.0%
Total Respondents	171	86	153	148	89	647

4. Do you think the **High School** curriculum in your community meets today's needs, or should it be changed?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Needs to be changed	30.1%	46.2%	29.4%	20.1%	45.3%	31.8%
Already meets today's needs	16.9%	13.2%	23.9%	31.1%	29.5%	23.1%
Don't know	47.0%	34.1%	40.5%	39.6%	17.9%	38.1%
(No Response)	6.0%	6.6%	6.1%	9.1%	7.4%	7.0%
Total Respondents	172	85	153	149	88	647

5. How important are co-curricular activities such as school band, dramatics, sports, and the school newspaper to a young person's education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Very important	48.1%	42.9%	50.3%	46.3%	44.2%	47.0%
Fairly important	38.3%	41.8%	35.0%	36.0%	35.8%	37.1%
Not too important	7.1%	11.0%	7.4%	7.9%	8.4%	8.0%
Not important at all	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	5.3%	1.7%
(No Response)	5.5%	3.3%	6.1%	8.5%	6.3%	6.2%
Total Respondents	173	88	153	150	89	653

6. In general, do you think **Elementary** school children in your district's schools are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Too hard	3.3%	11.0%	6.7%	4.9%	7.4%	6.0%
About right	49.2%	50.5%	39.9%	48.8%	43.2%	46.3%
Not hard enough	11.5%	11.0%	23.3%	7.3%	18.9%	14.2%
Don't know	29.0%	19.8%	23.3%	29.3%	25.3%	26.0%
(No Response)	7.1%	7.7%	6.7%	9.8%	5.3%	7.5%
Total Respondents	170	84	152	148	90	644

7. In general, do you think **Junior High** school children in your district's schools are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Too hard	2.2%	7.7%	3.7%	6.1%	2.1%	4.2%
About right	34.4%	40.7%	30.1%	37.2%	36.8%	35.2%
Not hard enough	21.3%	16.5%	23.3%	8.5%	24.2%	18.5%
Don't know	35.0%	28.6%	33.7%	39.0%	31.6%	34.3%
(No Response)	7.1%	6.6%	9.2%	9.1%	5.3%	7.8%
Total Respondents	170	85	148	149	90	642

8. In general, do you think **High School** school children in your district's schools are made to work too hard in school and on homework, or not hard enough?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Too hard	1.1%	3.3%	1.2%	0.0%	4.2%	1.6%
About right	22.4%	33.0%	28.2%	28.7%	23.2%	26.7%
Not hard enough	27.3%	31.9%	30.1%	18.3%	40.0%	28.2%
Don't know	41.5%	26.4%	33.1%	44.5%	26.3%	36.2%
(No Response)	7.7%	5.5%	7.4%	8.5%	6.3%	7.3%
Total Respondents	169	86	151	150	89	645

9. Please write in the names of the subjects you consider the weakest in your district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
9a In the Elementary grades:						
(Any response)	31.1%	31.9%	41.1%	28.7%	27.4%	32.5%
(No response)	68.9%	68.1%	58.9%	71.3%	72.6%	67.5%
Total respondents	57	29	67	47	26	226
9b In the Junior High grades:						
(Any response)	32.2%	37.4%	38.7%	28.7%	27.4%	32.9%
(No response)	67.8%	62.6%	61.3%	71.3%	72.6%	67.1%
Total respondents	59	34	63	47	26	229
9c In the High School grades:						
(Any response)	39.3%	34.1%	42.3%	34.1%	36.8%	37.8%
(No response)	60.7%	65.9%	57.7%	65.9%	63.2%	62.2%
Total respondents	72	31	69	56	35	263

10. Please write the names of the subjects you consider the strongest in your district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
10a In the Elementary grades:						
(Any response)	26.2%	26.4%	29.4%	27.4%	25.3%	27.2%
(No response)	73.8%	73.6%	70.6%	72.6%	74.7%	72.8%
Total respondents	48	24	48	45	24	189
10b In the Junior High grades:						
(Any response)	23.5%	20.9%	28.2%	20.7%	21.1%	23.3%
(No response)	76.5%	79.1%	71.8%	79.3%	78.9%	76.7%
Total respondents	43	19	46	34	20	162
10c In the High School grades:						
(Any response)	24.0%	22.0%	39.3%	27.4%	28.4%	28.7%
(No response)	76.0%	78.0%	60.7%	72.6%	71.6%	71.3%
Total respondents	44	20	64	45	27	200

11. Some schools allow students to progress through the school system at their own pace, without regard to the usual grade levels. Would you favor or oppose such a plan for your school district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Favor	26.8%	25.3%	27.0%	20.7%	32.6%	26.0%
Oppose	35.5%	50.5%	39.3%	43.3%	45.3%	41.5%
Unsure	32.2%	18.7%	27.0%	25.0%	16.8%	25.4%
(No Response)	5.5%	5.5%	6.7%	11.0%	5.3%	7.0%
Total Respondents	173	86	152	146	90	647

12. How would you feel about extending the school day by one hour in your district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Favor	35.0%	25.3%	31.3%	27.4%	38.9%	31.6%
Oppose	37.7%	47.3%	38.0%	41.5%	33.7%	39.4%
Unsure	23.0%	22.0%	22.1%	22.0%	21.1%	22.1%
(No Response)	4.4%	5.5%	8.6%	9.1%	6.3%	6.9%
Total Respondents	175	86	149	149	89	648

13. Your district's high school prepares students for both careers and college. In your opinion, does this high school:

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Need more emphasis on college	19.1%	22.0%	9.8%	16.5%	24.2%	17.4%
Need more emphasis on career	16.4%	17.6%	23.3%	18.9%	20.0%	19.3%
Have the right mix of both	13.1%	9.9%	18.4%	18.3%	21.1%	16.2%
Unsure	32.8%	28.6%	27.6%	27.4%	15.8%	27.4%
(No Response)	18.6%	22.0%	20.9%	18.9%	18.9%	19.7%
Total Respondents	149	71	129	133	77	559

14. How do you feel about student discipline in your school district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Too strict	1.1%	2.2%	0.6%	2.4%	1.1%	1.4%
Just about right	32.8%	22.0%	37.4%	51.8%	27.4%	36.2%
Not strict enough	30.1%	51.6%	33.7%	18.9%	45.3%	33.2%
Don't know	26.8%	16.5%	19.0%	15.2%	16.8%	19.5%
(No Response)	9.3%	7.7%	9.2%	11.6%	9.5%	9.6%
Total Respondents	166	84	148	145	86	629

15. Other than by talking with members of your family, where do you get most of your information about your school district. Please mark all that apply.

		ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Newspapers	Selected	62.3%	28.6%	63.8%	67.1%	52.6%	58.0%
	Not selected	37.7%	71.4%	36.2%	32.9%	47.4%	42.0%
	Total respondents	114	26	104	110	50	404
Radio or T.V.	Selected	7.1%	5.5%	12.9%	7.3%	5.3%	8.0%
	Not selected	92.9%	94.5%	87.1%	92.7%	94.7%	92.0%
	Total respondents	13	5	21	12	5	56
Neighbors or friends	Selected	60.7%	71.4%	64.4%	67.7%	73.7%	66.4%
	Not selected	39.3%	28.6%	35.6%	32.3%	26.3%	33.6%
	Total respondents	111	65	105	111	70	462
School employees	Selected	24.0%	35.2%	30.7%	28.0%	26.3%	28.3%
	Not selected	76.0%	64.8%	69.3%	72.0%	73.7%	71.7%
	Total respondents	44	32	50	46	25	197
School newsletters	Selected	42.6%	38.5%	33.1%	27.4%	8.4%	31.6%
	Not selected	57.4%	61.5%	66.9%	72.6%	91.6%	68.4%
	Total respondents	78	35	54	45	8	220
School meetings	Selected	5.5%	14.3%	12.3%	9.1%	9.5%	9.6%
	Not selected	94.5%	85.7%	87.7%	90.9%	90.5%	90.4%
	Total respondents	10	13	20	15	9	67
(Other)	Selected	6.6%	7.7%	6.7%	5.5%	8.4%	6.8%
	Not selected	93.4%	92.3%	93.3%	94.5%	91.6%	93.2%
	Total respondents	12	7	11	9	8	47

16. Do you feel that the use of alcohol (beer, wine, and other liquor) by students in your district's schools is a problem?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Very serious	19.7%	18.7%	20.2%	20.1%	17.9%	19.5%
Fairly serious	40.4%	44.0%	36.2%	40.2%	41.1%	39.9%
Not too serious	10.9%	13.2%	11.7%	12.2%	20.0%	12.9%
Don't know	23.5%	19.8%	26.4%	20.7%	15.8%	22.0%
(No Response)	5.5%	4.4%	5.5%	6.7%	5.3%	5.6%
Total Respondents	173	87	154	153	90	657

17. Do you feel that the use of drugs by students in your district's schools is a problem?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Very serious	19.7%	24.2%	13.5%	11.6%	14.7%	16.2%
Fairly serious	32.2%	34.1%	27.0%	33.5%	22.1%	30.2%
Not too serious	15.3%	14.3%	24.5%	24.4%	31.6%	21.7%
Don't know	27.9%	24.2%	29.4%	23.8%	26.3%	26.6%
(No Response)	4.9%	3.3%	5.5%	6.7%	5.3%	5.3%
Total Respondents	174	88	154	153	90	659

18. How many educational changes are being tried in your community?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Too many	1.6%	2.2%	1.8%	1.2%	0.0%	1.4%
About right	14.8%	14.3%	16.6%	29.3%	16.8%	18.8%
Not enough	22.4%	37.4%	17.2%	14.6%	40.0%	23.7%
Don't know	56.8%	39.6%	55.8%	47.6%	36.8%	49.4%
(No Response)	4.4%	6.6%	8.6%	7.3%	6.3%	6.6%
Total Respondents	175	85	149	152	89	650

19. In the last 5 years has your overall attitude toward the schools in your district become more favorable or less favorable?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
More favorable	16.9%	7.7%	17.2%	20.1%	16.8%	16.5%
No change	29.0%	29.7%	33.1%	43.3%	23.2%	32.6%
Less favorable	22.4%	45.1%	27.6%	15.9%	46.3%	28.3%
No opinion	23.0%	13.2%	14.1%	11.6%	5.3%	14.5%
(No Response)	8.7%	4.4%	8.0%	9.1%	8.4%	8.0%
Total Respondents	167	87	150	149	87	640

20. Listed here are factors that might be considered in choosing a public school for a child, assuming that a free choice of public schools was allowed. Indicate whether you would consider each factor as very important, fairly important, not too important at all in choosing a local school (only check ( ) one box per line):

		ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Teaching staff quality	Very important	88.0%	90.1%	88.3%	86.0%	90.5%	88.2%
	Fairly important	2.2%	2.2%	2.5%	2.4%	1.1%	2.2%
	Not important	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
	(No response)	9.3%	7.7%	9.2%	11.6%	8.4%	9.5%
	Total respondents	166	84	148	145	87	630
Maintenance of student discipline	Very important	76.0%	79.1%	77.9%	70.7%	75.8%	75.6%
	Fairly important	12.6%	14.3%	12.9%	16.5%	13.7%	13.9%
	Not important	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	1.1%	0.6%
	(No Response)	10.4%	6.6%	9.2%	12.2%	9.5%	9.9%
	Total respondents	164	85	148	144	86	627
Curriculum (subjects)	Very important	77.6%	81.3%	80.4%	73.2%	86.3%	78.9%
	Fairly important	8.7%	13.2%	8.0%	11.0%	2.1%	8.8%
	Not important	1.1%	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%
	(No response)	12.6%	5.5%	10.4%	14.6%	10.5%	11.4%
	Total respondents	160	86	146	140	85	617
School size	Very important	20.8%	22.0%	22.1%	29.3%	36.8%	25.4%
	Fairly important	45.9%	47.3%	49.7%	36.6%	40.0%	44.0%
	Not important	20.8%	26.4%	18.4%	20.1%	13.7%	19.8%
	(No response)	12.6%	4.4%	9.8%	14.0%	9.5%	10.8%
	Total respondents	160	87	147	141	86	621

Class size	Very important	49.7%	46.2%	53.4%	49.4%	45.3%	49.4%
	Fairly important	36.1%	38.5%	32.5%	34.8%	37.9%	35.5%
	Not important	2.7%	8.8%	4.3%	2.4%	5.3%	4.2%
	(No response)	11.5%	6.6%	9.8%	13.4%	11.6%	10.9%
	Total respondents	162	85	147	142	84	620
High school placement record	Very important	43.7%	46.2%	44.8%	40.9%	50.5%	44.5%
	Fairly important	39.9%	40.7%	34.4%	36.6%	29.5%	36.5%
	Not important	5.5%	6.6%	10.4%	7.3%	9.5%	7.8%
	(No response)	10.9%	6.6%	10.4%	15.2%	10.5%	11.2%
	Total respondents	163	85	146	139	85	618
Student's grades (test scores)	Very important	43.7%	44.0%	46.6%	31.7%	54.7%	43.1%
	Fairly important	39.9%	47.3%	36.2%	48.8%	25.3%	40.1%
	Not important	3.8%	1.1%	5.5%	3.7%	8.4%	4.5%
	(No response)	12.6%	7.7%	11.7%	15.9%	11.6%	12.4%
	Total respondents	160	84	144	138	84	610
Convenience of school location	Very important	22.4%	30.8%	30.7%	29.3%	25.3%	27.4%
	Fairly important	48.1%	51.6%	47.9%	43.9%	51.6%	48.0%
	Not important	18.6%	13.2%	9.2%	11.6%	12.6%	13.2%
	(No response)	10.9%	4.4%	12.3%	15.2%	10.5%	11.4%
	Total respondents	163	87	143	139	85	617
Co-curricular activities	Very important	25.1%	31.9%	31.3%	29.9%	30.5%	29.3%
	Fairly important	54.6%	56.0%	50.9%	43.9%	42.1%	49.7%
	Not important	9.8%	6.6%	7.4%	13.4%	15.8%	10.5%
	(No response)	10.4%	5.5%	10.4%	12.8%	11.6%	10.5%
	Total respondents	164	86	146	143	84	623
Athletic Programs	Very important	20.2%	30.8%	30.7%	22.6%	27.4%	25.6%
	Fairly important	52.5%	47.3%	42.3%	46.3%	35.8%	45.7%
	Not important	16.9%	16.5%	16.6%	18.3%	26.3%	18.4%
	(No response)	10.4%	5.5%	10.4%	12.8%	10.5%	10.3%
	Total respondents	164	86	146	143	85	624

21. What do you like least about the school your children attend?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any response)	38.8%	47.3%	42.9%	36.0%	43.2%	40.8%
(No Response)	61.2%	52.7%	57.1%	64.0%	56.8%	58.2%
Total Respondents	71	43	70	59	41	284

22. What do you like most about the school your children attend?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any response)	37.7%	49.5%	41.1%	42.1%	43.2%	41.8%
(No Response)	62.3%	50.5%	58.9%	57.9%	56.8%	58.2%
Total Respondents	69	45	67	69	41	291

23. Over the past five years have the public schools in your district:

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Improved	18.0%	9.9%	14.7%	14.6%	15.8%	15.1%
Stayed the same	27.3%	28.6%	36.8%	47.0%	33.7%	35.2%
Gotten worse	9.3%	29.7%	12.9%	4.9%	32.6%	14.9%
Don't know	33.9%	22.0%	26.4%	19.5%	11.6%	24.1%
(No Response)	11.5%	9.9%	9.2%	14.0%	6.3%	10.6%
Total Respondents	162	82	148	141	89	622

24. Would you favor or oppose extending the opportunity of full-day kindergarten to parents of kindergarten-aged children?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Favor	31.7%	34.1%	30.7%	24.4%	34.7%	30.5%
Oppose	42.6%	45.1%	48.5%	39.6%	32.6%	42.2%
No opinion	20.8%	17.6%	15.3%	27.4%	27.4%	21.6%
(No Response)	4.9%	3.3%	5.5%	8.5%	5.3%	5.7%
Total Respondents	174	88	154	150	90	656

25. Do you feel a child should be retained (not promoted one year) without parent consent if the school recommends that the child should be?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	48.6%	46.2%	51.5%	45.7%	51.6%	48.7%
No	34.4%	37.4%	31.9%	29.3%	31.6%	32.6%
Don't know	12.6%	13.2%	11.0%	15.9%	10.5%	12.8%
(No Response)	4.4%	3.3%	5.5%	9.1%	6.3%	5.9%
Total Respondents	175	88	154	149	89	655

26. In what size school (number of students) do you think that Elementary students today get the best education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Under 200	32.2%	40.7%	27.6%	29.9%	58.9%	35.3%
200 to 400	39.3%	38.5%	41.7%	47.0%	21.1%	39.1%
400 to 600	9.3%	7.7%	12.9%	4.9%	4.2%	8.2%
600 to 800	0.0%	1.1%	1.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%
over 800	1.1%	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%	1.1%	0.9%
(No Response)	18.0%	11.0%	16.0%	17.1%	14.7%	15.9%
Total Respondents	150	81	137	136	81	585

27. In what size school (number of students) do you think that Junior High students today get the best education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Under 200	21.9%	38.5%	22.7%	26.2%	48.4%	28.9%
200 to 400	47.5%	40.7%	47.2%	49.4%	26.3%	44.1%
400 to 600	11.5%	8.8%	9.8%	4.9%	9.5%	8.9%
600 to 800	1.1%	1.1%	3.1%	1.8%	1.1%	1.7%
over 800	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	0.6%	1.1%	0.7%
(No Response)	16.9%	9.9%	17.2%	17.1%	13.7%	15.7%
Total Respondents	152	82	135	136	82	587

28. In what size school (number of students) do you think that High School students today get the best education?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Under 200	18.0%	24.2%	8.6%	15.2%	23.2%	16.7%
200 to 400	34.4%	45.1%	45.4%	42.1%	32.6%	39.9%
400 to 600	22.4%	13.2%	20.9%	15.2%	24.2%	19.4%
600 to 800	6.0%	6.6%	7.4%	6.7%	3.2%	6.2%
over 800	2.2%	1.1%	1.2%	3.7%	3.2%	2.3%
(No Response)	16.9%	9.9%	16.6%	17.1%	13.7%	15.5%
Total Respondents	152	82	136	136	82	588

29. Would you like to send your children to different public schools?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Yes	10.4%	17.6%	14.7%	5.5%	25.3%	13.2%
No	62.3%	58.2%	60.7%	68.3%	40.0%	59.8%
(No Response)	27.3%	24.2%	24.5%	26.2%	34.7%	27.0%
Total Respondents	133	69	123	121	62	508

29a If Yes, which other district's schools would you want to send them to?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
El Paso	0.0%	3.3%	6.7%	0.6%	0.0%	2.2%
Lowpoint-Washburn	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Minonk-Dana-Rutland	1.6%	1.1%	0.0%	0.6%	7.4%	1.7%
Roanoke-Benson	2.2%	4.4%	1.8%	0.0%	4.2%	2.2%
Toluca	0.0%	1.1%	1.8%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%
(No Response)	96.2%	89.0%	89.6%	98.2%	88.4%	93.1%
Total Respondents	7	10	17	3	11	48

30. In your view what are the biggest problems facing your school district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any response)	55.2%	67.0%	69.9%	64.6%	77.9%	65.5%
(No Response)	44.8%	33.0%	30.1%	35.4%	22.1%	34.5%
Total Respondents	101	61	114	106	74	456

31. Suppose that your district's School Board said they needed more money. as you feel at this time, would you (choose only one):

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
Raise taxes	42.6%	41.8%	53.4%	42.7%	60.0%	47.4%
Cut school programs	9.3%	13.2%	11.7%	15.9%	6.3%	11.5%
Seek reorganization	32.2%	33.0%	25.2%	26.8%	22.1%	28.0%
(No Response)	15.8%	12.1%	9.8%	14.6%	11.6%	13.1%
Total Respondents	154	80	147	140	84	605

32. What, if anything, do you think your school district should be doing that it is not doing?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any Response)	32.2%	49.5%	43.6%	31.7%	62.1%	41.1%
(No Response)	67.8%	50.5%	56.4%	68.3%	37.9%	58.9%
Total Respondents	59	45	71	52	59	286

33. In what ways are the schools in your district particularly good?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any response)	39.3%	39.6%	44.8%	36.0%	46.3%	40.8%
(No Response)	60.7%	60.4%	55.2%	64.0%	53.7%	59.2%
Total Respondents	72	36	73	59	44	284

34. What suggestions would you make to get the parents, the community, and the school to work together to improve education in your district?

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any response)	30.1%	48.4%	46.6%	33.5%	54.7%	40.5%
(No Response)	69.9%	51.6%	53.4%	66.5%	45.3%	59.5%
Total Respondents	55	44	76	55	52	282

35. Please add any additional comments you would like to make about your school district below.

	ELP	LW	MDR	RB	TOL	Total
(Any response)	36.6%	48.4%	43.6%	29.3%	46.3%	39.4%
(No Response)	63.4%	51.6%	56.4%	70.7%	53.7%	60.6%
Total Respondents	67	44	71	48	44	274